

THE ARGOSY.

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THE ENGAGEMENT OF SUSAN CHASE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. LEICESTER.

IT was early morning in Barbadoes. A carriage, which had been on its way to Bridgetown, was suddenly stopped by its inmate, and ordered back to whence it came. So the black driver turned it round, whipped up his horses, and soon drove into the grounds of a pretty country residence.

A lady, young and nice-looking, descended from the carriage, and entered the house. She passed into one of the sitting-rooms, closed the door, and sank down on the sofa; if ever tribulation was expressed on a human countenance, it was on hers.

"To bring herself to shame!" she wailed—"to quit her husband's home clandestinely, and depart with another, over the wide seas!—to enter deliberately on a wrong course!—to desert him on what may be his bed of death! And to leave me here, unprotected, in his house, where I ought not to be! Oh that I had known Emma better, and never come out to her!"

Susan Chase suddenly stayed her words, and held her breath. A gentlemanly voice was accosting the coachman, who, like all his native fraternity, was taking his own time ere he drove off to the stables, and the conversation ascended to her ears through the open window.

"Have you brought back your mistress, Jicko?"

"No," cried Jicko. "Mistress not anywhere. Mistress gone to England in the ship."

"Nonsense, Jicko! You are inventing."

"Ask missee," responded Jicko. "She know."

The gentleman turned from Jicko, and entered the sitting-room. He was one of the clerical staff at Barbadoes, and had recently been appointed to a church there; previously to that he had acted as an

assistant, or missionary, though in holy orders. He was about thirty years of age, with a prepossessing, intellectual countenance. His name was Leicester.

"You have not found Mrs. Carnagie, Miss Chase?" he said to Susan.

What answer was Susan to give? This gentleman had been present when she departed, half an hour before, in search of her sister, had closed the carriage door for her, and agreed with her in assuming that Mrs. Carnagie had slept at the friend's house, where she had gone to an evening party the previous night. To confirm the news that her sister had departed clandestinely for England, was to betray all: yet how keep the tidings from him? Confused words rose to her lips, but one contradicted another; and bewildered, terrified, and helpless, she burst into an hysterical flood of tears.

A suspicion of the truth arose in the mind of Mr. Leicester. For he had been a frequent visitor, and had observed, with disapprobation, certain points in the recent conduct of Mrs. Carnagie. Susan sobbed like a child. It was not often she could be aroused to such emotion, but when it did come, it was uncontrollable.

"Strive for composure," whispered Mr. Leicester. "I fear you are in some strait, some deep distress, apart from the anxiety caused by the illness of Mr. Carnagie. You want a friend: my calling has led me amidst suffering and sorrow of all kinds: dear Miss Chase, let me be that friend."

"Oh that I had a friend!" answered Susan. "I am indeed in a strait; and I know not where to turn to for advice or help."

"Turn to me: tell me all that is causing you grief. Believe me, I have had so much experience in the varied tribulations of life, that I am old in them, beyond what my years may seem to justify. All that the truest counsel, the deepest sympathy can do for you, I will do."

Susan listened. An adviser she must have; left to herself, she should sink under the weight of care that was upon her; and in all Barbadoes there was not one she would rather confide in, than in this kind, conscientious minister; no, not in any, even double his age. Yet she still shrank from speaking, and she turned her aching head away from the light.

"I heard from Jicko that Mrs. Carnagie has departed for England, and I infer that you and her husband were left in ignorance of her intention," he resumed, in low tones, anxious to invite confidence by showing that he was not unprepared for it. "May I tell you, Miss Chase, that I have almost foreseen this? may I also tell you that I remonstrated privately with Mrs. Carnagie not a week ago, and entreated her to be more with her husband, and less with Captain Chard?"

So! he knew it all. The crimson flush came into Susan's cheeks, but she dried her tears.

"Oh, Mr. Leicester, she may not have gone away with him—in the worst sense of the term. Things between her and her husband have not been pleasant, especially on my sister's side. She has grown to dislike him; she told me so: and she is headstrong and self-willed. She may have departed to separate herself from Mr. Carnagie, without—without anything worse."

Mr. Leicester could not adopt this unusual view of such a case, but he did not press his own. "How did you become acquainted with her departure?" he inquired.

"As I was going along, one of the officers rode up to the carriage to ask after Mr. Carnagie, and remarked how unfortunate it was the fever should have attacked him, just when Mrs. Carnagie was called to England. He said he was on the ship, last night, when she and her maid came on board."

"Which of them was it?"

"Lieutenant Grape. He also observed that it was lucky Captain Chard happened to be going in the same vessel, as he could protect her," added Susan, eagerly. "Therefore *he* suspects nothing amiss."

"Does Mr. Carnagie suspect it?"

"Oh no. When he came home last night, ill, he asked for Emma, but she had gone out then. How distressing that the fever should have come on so rapidly."

"It has not come on rapidly," returned the clergyman. "I was sure it was attacking him, yesterday morning, and told him so."

"You have had more experience than I, in these West Indian maladies, Mr. Leicester—indeed, I have had none at all: do you judge him to be dangerously ill?"

"I do fear so."

"This step of my sister's has placed me in an inconvenient position," she resumed, without raising her eyes. "It is awkward for me to be here alone."

"Yes, it is. You had better come to us, Miss Chase. Mrs. Freeman will do all she can to make you feel at home."

Susan reflected, hesitated, reflected again, and then spoke. "I would most willingly and thankfully come, but do you deem that I should be acting rightly in leaving the house at this moment—in leaving Mr. Carnagie entirely to servants?"

"Of course your care and supervision would be worth more than all they can do. Your remaining here would be better for him."

"Then I will remain," said Susan. "It seems to be a duty thrown in my way, and I will not shrink from it. As soon as he shall be out of danger, if you and your sister will receive me until I can make arrangements for my departure to Europe, I shall be thankful."

"You are not afraid of remaining in the house—afraid of the fever?"

"I have no fear on that score," returned Susan.

"I thought that was why you spoke."

"Oh no. I thought—I thought—whether any ill-natured remarks might be made, at my being here alone."

"Certainly not; oh, certainly not," said Mr. Leicester. "You are closely related to Mr. Carnegie: his wife's own sister."

True. But Susan knew that Mr. Leicester was not aware how ardently she and Charles Carnegie had once been attached to each other; how they had been engaged for years. *There* lay the chief reason for the inexpediency of the measure. Not inexpedient in itself: Susan was secure in her own self-reliance: but, those at home, who had been acquainted with the engagement, might say his house was not the place for her now.

"I am not learned in these points of etiquette," resumed Mr. Leicester, perceiving that Susan still looked doubtful. "If you think it would be better, I am sure my sister will willingly come here and stay with you, until you can remove."

"Oh, how pleased I should be!" uttered Susan, with animation; "that would put an end to all difficulties. Do you think she would really come? Would she not fear the fever?"

"She would not fear that. She had it a year ago. I will promise that she shall be with you before the day is over."

"What should I have done without you?" exclaimed Susan, in the fulness of her gratitude.

The clergyman rose to leave. "I hope to be more useful to you yet."

"Stay an instant, Mr. Leicester. Will it be possible," she added, lowering her voice, "for us to favour Mr. Grape's supposition that my sister has really been called to England. You know a ship did come in, that day, with letters. It will be an untruth; but in such a case may it not be justifiable—in charity and in mercy? She may not, after all, have gone there wrongly: excepting, inasmuch as that she has left her husband's home."

"You still cling to that idea," he observed. "Well, I do not see why it should not be favoured. If the impression is abroad that she has gone legitimately, it will only be for you to leave it uncontradicted."

"You will not hint to the contrary?" breathed Susan.

He looked at her reproachfully. "No, Miss Chase. But there are the servants here."

"I will manage that."

"And—there will be her husband, when he is better."

"Yes," said Susan, inwardly shivering. "We cannot tell what his belief—his course—may be. But he may not live."

Mr. Leicester quitted the house, thoroughly convinced as to what Mr. Carnegie's belief would be, though he might not be so certain as to his course.

The promised friend came without delay: Mrs. Freeman. She was a young, lively widow, very much given to talking. She openly

lamented, and that ten times over in the course of the first day, the inopportune summons to England of Mrs. Carnagie. Mr. Leicester had kept faith, even with her, and Susan's heart thanked him.

"My dear, I admire you," she cried to Susan. "Many a young lady, situated as you were, would have flown off with Mrs. Carnagie, and left the poor man to the mercy of the fever, and the natives, who are just as stupid and tiresome as so many animals. It was exceedingly good and praiseworthy of you to brave the infection—which, truth to say, is fonder of flying to fresh Europeans, like you, than to old acclimatised ones—and to brave the chatter of the gossip-mongers."

"You think they will chatter?" cried Susan.

"I think they might—for you and Mr. Carnagie are both young—had you not hit upon the plan of having some one in the house as chaperon. Of course they can't now. My brother could not understand that they would, in any case; but his head's buried in his duties, like an ostrich's in the sand, and he judges people and motives in accordance with his clerical tenets. I know the set out here; it is whispering and scandal, among them, from morning till night. That Mrs. Jacobson's the worst, and she is your sister's dearest friend. Is she going to make a long stay in England?"

"I am very grateful to you for coming," said Susan, avoiding the question.

"Not at all, my dear. If we did not help each other in this world, where should we be when we come to answer for ourselves in the next?"

"You are sure you do not fear the fever?"

"Not I. I had it last autumn, and it will not pay me a visit again. They were saying at Mrs. Lettson's, last night, that Mr. Carnagie was surely in for it."

Susan lifted up her head with interest. "Were you at Mrs. Lettson's?"

"Yes. It is not often I attend evening parties, but Mrs. Lettson promised me some good music."

Susan longed to put a question—if she dared. How could she frame it? She wanted to know whether Emma had appeared there at all.

"Did—was this voyage of my sister's spoken of?" she said, at length.

"Not at first. None of them knew of it: at least, so I inferred. Mrs. Lettson was openly wondering what had become of her, as she had promised to be there. Towards the end of the evening—morning it was by that time—when we were breaking up, a note came in from Mrs. Carnagie, saying she had been summoned to England on urgent business, and had been too busy with her preparations to send an earlier apology."

Many people called that day and the succeeding ones, to inquire

after Lieutenant Carnagie. They were, for the most part, content with driving up to the door and driving away from it; only a few entered, probably "old acclimatised ones," as Mrs. Freeman expressed it, who did not fear the fever. There was a difference of opinion in Barbadoes, even amongst medical men, whether it was infectious, or whether it was not so: many held that it was not so, though it frequently became epidemic. Mrs. Freeman saw all visitors in place of Susan; and she unconsciously (without having an idea that the facts would not have borne her out) helped to keep up the assumption that Mrs. Carnagie had gone to England on business. Susan might possibly have betrayed herself, for she was a bad dissembler, but she was too inwardly miserable to see any one, and she had her excuse in attending upon Lieutenant Carnagie.

He was very ill. For four days Susan and the head servant (a native woman, who had grown-up children of her own) scarcely left his chamber. At the end of that time the fever abated, and he grew conscious. The fifth day, he lay in a half-stupor, his eyes only open at intervals; the sixth, he was decidedly better; and, though he scarcely spoke, seemed to watch what was going on.

Towards the evening of this day, Brillianna (they give themselves such fine names, those poor natives!) had gone from the room, and Susan was alone. She was sitting by the bed, half asleep, for an unusual sensation of drowsiness and languor was over her, when she was startled by the invalid's putting out one hand and taking hold of hers, which happened to be resting on the bed. It shook and trembled with weakness. Susan, in her compassion, did not withdraw hers, but leaned over him.

"You are better, Mr. Carnagie. We are all very thankful."

"How long have I lain here?" he murmured.

"To-morrow will be the seventh day."

"I suppose I have been in danger?"

"Oh yes; but that is over now. Quite over."

"Where's Emma?"

! The question turned Susan sick. WHAT was she to answer?

"Since I regained consciousness, I have been looking for her, but I have never seen her. All this day I have been waiting, and keeping awake on purpose, but she has not come in."

"She—has—gone from home for a little while," stammered Susan. It was the best excuse that arose to her.

He raised his head with a start, but it fell back again, and both his hands clasped over Susan's, from, as it seemed, emotion.

"Susan! Is *she* ill? She has not caught it, and died in it?"

"No, indeed," returned Susan, in earnest accents, "I assure you it is not so. She is quite well, and has not been ill. Pray do not agitate yourself: it might undo all the amendment. She is only from home, as I tell you."

"I want her to come and see me. I want to be reconciled to her.

We have been going on very unsatisfactorily, but if she will forget and forgive, so will I. Ask her to come, Susan."

"I—yes—when you are better," stammered Susan again.

"Is she afraid of me?—afraid of taking the fever?"

"No—yes—perhaps she is," faltered poor Susan.

"Can you get her here to-night?"

"No; not to-night. In a few days—when you are stronger."

"How is it you did not run away from the infection, as well as Emma?"

"I am not afraid of taking diseases: I have been more amongst illness than Emma."

"And you have remained with me, and she has flown!" proceeded Mr. Carnegie. "Yet she is my wife, and you—only one whom I rejected. Oh, Susan! my blind folly presses upon me sorely now. I have marked you around my bed, watching me, as she ought to have watched, and my heart has been ready to burst at the reflection that, but for my insane conduct, it would have been your own place."

She was much pained, and strove to draw away her hand.

"Let it be," he quickly said, holding it closer between his own. "You cannot grudge its resting there for a minute or two: you were willing, once, to let it rest there for ever. Do not be angry, Susan: I am not going to insult you, by saying that I care for you, still, more than anything else on earth; but the contrast between your conduct and hers is casting a dark shadow on me now, and I must speak out."

"Mr. Carnegie," she said, "you are Emma's husband; it is for her sake that I have remained with you in your dangerous illness. You are not repaying me as you ought. You must know these words and allusions to be unfitting and unkind."

"Ay; I am Emma's husband, and we are only brother and sister. I know, and see, and feel all that I have lost, and I know that I must put up with it, and make the best of what *is*. I am prepared to do that: I tell you, I have been hoping, as I lay here, that I and Emma may mutually forgive each other, and go on more cordially than we have hitherto done. What else would you have, Susan?"

"Oh, if it could be!" aspirated Susan, from the very depths of her despairing heart.

"But this is an unpromising beginning towards it," continued Mr. Carnegie, "her going from me in this way. Suppose I had died?"

Susan had nothing to answer.

"And you say she will not come home, now, for some days. Where is she staying?"

"You—you shall know particulars when you are stronger," replied Susan. "You must not talk now."

Brillianna returned to the chamber, and Susan left it, afraid lest the questions of Mr. Carnegie, as to his wife's absence, might become too close. She went to the drawing-room, and sat with Mrs. Freeman.

"Brillianna says her master is better this evening," observed the latter.

"Much better," replied Susan.

There was a silence. Presently Mrs. Freeman spoke again, but she received no reply. Susan's eyes had closed. The lids looked swollen, and her cheeks were burning. Mrs. Freeman gazed at her in dismay.

"Miss Chase?"

She spoke loudly and abruptly, and it aroused Susan.

"What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," answered Susan. "Only I feel sleepy, and my head aches. It has been hot and heavy all the afternoon."

"I do not wish to alarm you unnecessarily, but it looks just like the fever coming on."

"Oh, not here!" uttered Susan, growing nervous at the fear presented to her. "I should not like to be laid up in Mr. Carnegie's house."

"I declare you have its very symptoms. I hope it may not be so. I will remain with you, should it prove so; be assured of that."

"But to be ill in this house!" persisted poor Susan, harping upon the, to her, most unsatisfactory point in the prospect. "Could I not be removed to yours?"

"If you particularly wish it. But our house is not so healthily situated, or so roomy, as this. We shall see how you are to-morrow."

But when the morrow came it was too late to remove Susan Chase. The fever had come on with a vengeance. It is probable that her harassed state of mind contributed to increase the delirium.

"Two invalids on my hands!" ejaculated Mrs. Freeman. "Well, I must prove myself equal to it. The danger is past with Mr. Carnegie, so I will turn him over to one of the others, and Brillianna shall transfer her nursing to Miss Chase. She's as obstinate as a mule, in temper, that woman, but she's a famous nurse. As to myself, I'll divide my supervision into three parts; two to be given to Susan Chase, and one to Mr. Carnegie."

When Mrs. Freeman could spare a moment from Susan, she went to pay her first visit that morning to Mr. Carnegie. "There is no need to ask how you are," was her salutation to him. "You look as brisk as possible; very different from what you looked three days ago."

"Yes, I am all right again. Brillianna says Susan is ill."

"She has taken the fever."

"I am vexed to hear it. Is there a fear of delirium coming on?"

"It is on already. Raging. New constitutions are knocked down soon. But there is one consolation, Mr. Carnegie; it will be the sooner spent. The fiercer the storm, the quicker it's over. I do not fear but that she will get through it."

"Of course her sister will come home to nurse her," emphatically uttered Mr. Carnegie.

"Who, come home?"

"My wife. If she kept aloof from me, she cannot do so from Susan."

"How can she come home?" cried Mrs. Freeman.

"How can she stay away?" retorted Mr. Carnegie. "Her own sister, who came out purposely to take care of her in her illness! she cannot let her lie and die—as it may be—amidst strangers, and not come near her. Have you sent to inform Mrs. Carnegie?"

Mrs. Freeman did not reply. Her private opinion, just then, was, that Lieutenant Carnegie's delirium had come back to him. She never supposed he could be ignorant of his wife's voyage.

"Where is it that my wife is staying?" he resumed. "I asked Susan yesterday, but she did not say. Only at Mrs. Jacobson's, I suppose."

"Well," remarked Mrs. Freeman, "this is the first time I ever knew that the fever obliterates the recollection of previous events. It will be a new point for the consideration of the doctors. Have you quite forgotten that Mrs. Carnegie sailed for Europe?"

Mr. Carnegie lay and looked at her. "Mrs. Carnegie has not sailed."

"Yes, she has. That is why I am staying here with Miss Chase. It would have been a cruel thing to leave her, in your house, without a protector, and you, perhaps, dying."

Mr. Carnegie was weak and ill, and he began to wonder whether his memory had played him false, as Mrs. Freeman asserted. He carried his thoughts back to the past. All in vain.

"I have no recollection," he said: "I do not comprehend, at all, what you are saying."

"Dear me! I hope it will return to you, as you grow stronger! Your wife started for England by the last packet; it sailed the very morning that your delirium came on. Ruth went with her; and Captain Chard sailed by the same vessel, and is taking charge of her on the voyage. Don't you remember now?"

At that moment Brillianna put in her head, and beckoned Mrs. Freeman from the room. It was well that it was so; otherwise, that lady might have obtained a curious elucidation of matters. Mr. Carnegie had time to digest the news, and to form his own opinion upon it. Whether an explosion of angry passion, or any other emotion, was given way to, cannot be told; he was alone; but the next time his medical attendant came to visit him, he insisted that something must have thrown Mr. Carnegie back, for he was worse again. Not a word said Mr. Carnegie.

CHAPTER VII.

THE END OF AN ILL-STARRED VISIT.

MRS. FREEMAN'S theory of "the fiercer the storm, the quicker it's over," whether right or wrong, in a general sense, certainly appeared to apply to the illness of Susan Chase. The turning-point in her malady soon

came, and then she progressed rapidly towards recovery. One day, after she was about again, she was sitting in an easy-chair at the open window of the drawing-room, when Mr. Carnegie came in. Mrs. Freeman had gone for an hour or two to her own home.

"Well, Susan," he said, "I am tolerably strong again, considering what the pull has been. Where's Emma? You said I was to know when I got well again."

Susan's face became livid. She was still weak, and the question terrified her. This was the moment she had so dreaded.

Mr. Carnegie drew forward a chair and sat down by her. "Shall I tell *you*, or will you tell *me*?" he said, in a marked manner.

Some words escaped from Susan's white lips; something to the effect of "did he know where she was?"

"I do. Was it not a fine recompense?" he continued, with suppressed passion. "We will say nothing of me, her husband, but of you. To bring you out, and then to throw you off in a strange place, without proper protectors, separated from your home and friends by the wide seas! Abandoned, shameless woman! Did you know of her flight the evening she left?"

"Oh no," answered Susan, who was trembling excessively. "If I had, it should have been prevented; by forcible means, had entreaties failed. What shall you do?"

"Need you ask? There is only one course open to me."

"And that?"

"Shoot Chard, and get a divorce."

"Oh, Mr. Carnegie!" she exclaimed in startled, wailing tones. "Do nothing in precipitation. It may not be so bad as it appears. She may have gone away only to separate herself from you, without any—any other intentions. Nothing suspicious, as to her voyage, has transpired here: it is universally looked upon as an innocent step. I do not wish to judge between you and Emma, but you must be aware that there was much ill-feeling between you."

"Say on her side, if you please," was his reply. "There would have been little on mine, but for her own temper and conduct. From the first hour that I brought her out, she gave me nothing but reproaches and cold looks; and for no earthly reason."

"She—she—some injudicious people told her tales to your former prejudice," stammered Susan, always a peace-maker, and anxious to offer what excuse she might for her erring sister.

"Psha!" angrily retorted Mr. Carnegie. "No matter what she heard to my prejudice, as to when I was a single man, it could not affect me as a married one—or her, either. Had she heard that I had fired Bridgetown, and boiled down the natives for soup, it was no business of hers. I brought her out here, Susan, to do my duty by her, to be a good husband, as a true-hearted man should be, and she was a fool, and something worse than a fool, to rake up my old scores against me. You would not have done it."

That was very true. But Susan did not say so.

"It has been folly and madness with us both, throughout the piece," he continued, "and now, I suppose, we are reaping our reward. To gratify a wild, hasty fancy, each took for the other, I was false to you, Susan, and to every spark of honour that ought to have stirred within me. I——"

"Mr. Carnagie," she interrupted, "speak on any topic but that. It is ungenerous of you to allude to it."

"I know that: it was but a passing allusion: but I should like you to glean how bitter to me are the ashes of self-reproach. I should think they are to her—for her conduct at that time—for you had been to her a tender, loving sister, and did not merit such a requital. What has followed that ill-advised step? We have led a cat-and-dog life together, and now she has lost herself; and I"—he stamped his foot—"am dishonoured in the sight of men."

"Have proof before you judge her harshly," whispered Susan again. "She may not have proceeded to extremes, or intend to do so. I will not believe, until I have absolute proof, that a sister of mine could so forget herself."

"I will wait for no proof, and I will never spare her," vehemently answered Mr. Carnagie. "The very moment that the law will rid me of her, I will be free. I am surprised you can seek to palliate her conduct, Susan, for her sin and shame tell upon you and her own family, almost as they do on me. Let us drop her name for ever."

He rose and stood as if gazing on the verandah, and the prospect beyond it, probably seeing nothing. Susan's thoughts turned, perhaps in spite of her wish, to the past, when she had been looking forward joyfully to her marriage with him. That marriage had been frustrated: yet here she was, in little more than twelve months, in his house, alone with him, far away from her own home and kindred; alone with him, now, in this room, and yet not his wife! It was very strange; and it was very undesirable; even with the visit of Mrs. Freeman, it was undesirable. Susan felt her position acutely, and leaned her head on her hand in perplexity.

"What a future to be anticipated!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Carnagie. "What will it be?"

"Ay, indeed," said Susan, rousing herself. "She did not think of her future when she left her home."

"Her future!" he scornfully rejoined—"her future requires no speculating upon; she has plainly marked it out for herself, and entered upon it; I was speaking of my own. Solitude and dissatisfaction are before me."

"I feel for you deeply. I wish I knew how to whisper a hope that it may be soothed to you."

"I wish you would whisper it, Susan," he answered, returning to his seat. And again there was a pause, which Mr. Carnagie broke.

"In a certain time I shall be clear of her. I do not know how

long these proceedings take, but I shall go to England and enter upon them immediately: they will grant me leave under the circumstances. In a few months, from now, I shall be a free man. Will you not whisper a hope for that period, Susan?"

She did not catch his meaning. "What hope is there that I can whisper?"

He bent towards her; he spoke in low tones; tones as tender as they had been in the years gone by. "Can it never be again with us, Susan, as it used to be? Will you not come out here, and take her place, and be to me my dearest wife?"

Susan sat with eyes and mouth open. "Mr. Carnagie!"

"If you will only forgive my infatuated folly, and remember it no more. Oh, Susan! put it into my power to atone for it! When the time shall come, if you will only have pity on me, and be mine, my whole life shall be one long atonement. Remember what we were to each other; let it come to us again. United in heart and hand, blessings may be in store for both of us."

Had Susan been strong and well, she would no doubt have left Lieutenant Carnagie and the room to themselves; as it was, after a vain attempt to rise, which he prevented, she burst into a miserable flood of tears.

"It needed not your presence here to renew my affection for you," he proceeded. "It had never really left you, though it was obscured by the ill-omened feeling that rushed over me and—her. That feeling, call it by what name we might, was neither affection nor love: it was a species of frenzy, a delirium, without foundation and without strength, and that's the best that can be said of it. Had you not come out here, Susan, my affection for you would have died away by degrees; in your presence, and with my wife still true to me, I would have buried it, and did bury it, within myself; you should never have heard of it or suspected it. But she is gone, and you and I are left: I pray you let us agree to render the future bright to each other."

She wrenched away the hand which he had taken, and covered her burning and tearful face, whilst sobs choked her utterance. "Oh, Mr. Carnagie! you are very cruel!"

"I love you better than of old: I love you, as I believe man never loved woman: I will strive to make your life one long sunshine. Susan! you are in my house; you tended my sick-bed and brought me round; you have no other protector here but my own self. Surely it all points to the expediency of your promising to become my wife. You must see it."

"Will you be generous?—*can* you be generous?" she uttered, in sarcastic tones, yet almost beside herself.

"I can, and will, be generous to you."

"Then release me, that I may instantly go from your presence. You will, if you have a spark of manly feeling within you."

"Will you not listen to me?"

"I will not listen to you : how dare you ask it ? My sister is your wife ; your wife, Mr. Carnagie ; and you are disgracing yourself and insulting me. To suffer what you have been saying to enter your thoughts, much more to give utterance to it, ought to have dyed your brow with shame. Proceed no further : I have friends in the island, close at hand, who will protect me if I appeal to them."

He looked gloomily at her. "Have you learned to hate me, Susan?"

"I had not learned to hate you. I esteemed you, and liked you, as my sister's husband. You are teaching me to hate you now."

"Look at my future," he returned ; "consider what it will be. Left here, to my deserted home, without any to care for me, or to make it what a home ought to be ; pointed at as a wronged man !—have you no compassion for me?"

"Yes, I have every compassion for you—as your wife's sister. All other ties between us have long been over."

"Never to be renewed ? Will no entreaty persuade you ? not even the pleadings of my unhappy love ?"

"Never ! Never ! I would almost rather have died in the fever than have lived to receive this insult : I would far rather die than become your wife ! You see that poor black slave," she vehemently cried, pointing to Jicko, who was at work in the garden—"well ; were it offered me to choose between you, I would marry him rather than you !"

Mr. Carnagie gave vent to a violent explosion of words, and strode from the room, closing the door after him with such force that it shook the slightly-built house. And Susan Chase, shattered in spirit and in frame, fell into hysterics and sobbed and cried, unheard by all.

She was growing more composed, and had risen to go to her own room, when Mr. Leicester entered. She sat down again, vexed that he should observe, which he could not fail to do, the traces of emotion on her face.

"I bring you a message from my sister," he said. "She finds more to look to, at home, than she anticipated, and will not be able to return before dinner : not until late in the evening."

Susan's state of feeling was such that she dared not speak. Her heart and eyes were brimful and running over. And now to be told that Mrs. Freeman would not be back until night : all those hours alone in the house with Mr. Carnagie.

"You do not look well, Miss Chase," he observed : "well or happy."

The tears must come ; there was no help for it, and they rained down ; but she managed to steady her voice.

"Mr. Leicester, you were kind enough, before my illness came on, to give me an invitation to your house. I wish I could be moved there."

"It is the very thing I and Mrs. Freeman have been speaking of to-day," he answered, pleasure beaming from his eyes. "We think the change would be most desirable. As soon as you shall be a little stronger, Mrs. Freeman can return home, and you with her."

"I am strong enough now," answered Susan, and her tone struck Mr. Leicester as one of painful eagerness. "Let me come at once, this afternoon. I cannot walk so far yet, but Jicko can drive me in the carriage. I shall not trouble you long," she continued, "for I shall sail by the next packet."

"Oh, no, indeed," he interrupted, answering her last sentence, "the next packet goes in a few days; we must keep you longer with us than that. Putting other considerations aside, you would not be strong enough to undertake the voyage."

"Strong or weak, I must go," she replied; "I cannot remain in Barbadoes. I wish I had never come to it."

"I hope nothing unpleasant has happened," he said, speaking with hesitation.

"No," returned Susan, evasively, "nothing particular. Only—after—the step my sister has taken, it is not agreeable to me to meet Mr. Carnagie. I shall be truly thankful for the shelter of your house and protection until I sail: and perhaps some time, in England, opportunity will be afforded us of returning your kind hospitality."

"Dear Miss Chase," he said, in low tones, "need you sail at all?"

Susan looked at him. Was *he* going to plead for Mr. Carnagie? No; he was going to plead for himself; and the warm colour rushed into the wan face of Susan. Perhaps she had half suspected that he might some time do it.

"You propose to honour my house for a temporary visit; to accept of my temporary protection: oh, Miss Chase, may I not ask you to accept of them for all time? I have admired and loved you ever since we met, and my dearest wish has long been that the future shall see you my wife. Let me hope for it!"

What with one offer and another, Susan was certainly confounded. She did not, in consequence, answer so readily as she might have done.

"My sister is soon to marry Mr. Grape," he resumed: "I mention it, lest you might deem her being with me an impediment in the way: but she probably has told you. All that the most tender——"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Leicester," interrupted Susan, recovering her senses; "pray do not continue: it will only be painful to us both. I feel sensibly your good opinion of me; your kind offer; and I thank you, but I can only decline it. Firmly and irrevocably decline it."

"Have you another attachment?" he asked, with saddened eyes and flushed face.

"No, indeed: but that is nothing to the purpose. It is impossible for me to entertain your offer. Please, do not recur to the subject again."

He sat silent a few minutes ; he saw there was no hope for him : that she meant what she said ; and, with a sigh, he prepared to depart.

"Then—I will go back now, and tell my sister to expect you?"

"Yes—if——" Susan looked at him and hesitated. After what had just passed, would he like her to become his guest, she was asking herself. Mr. Leicester's thoughts were quick.

"I am going up the country on a mission," he hastened to say. "I start this evening, and shall be away some days. I am sure Mrs. Freeman will strive to make you comfortable, both for me and herself."

How Susan thanked him in her heart. He held out his hand.

"I may not see you again, Miss Chase. May the blessing of Heaven go with you, wherever you may be. Fare you well!"

"Farewell, and thank you for all," was her tearful response, as she returned his hand's fervent clasp.

She watched him away, and then she stepped on to the verandah, called to Jicko, and ordered him to get the carriage ready. Next she proceeded to her chamber, gave directions to Brilliana about sending her things after her to Mrs. Freeman's, and then she sat down and wrote a brief note to Mr. Carnegie. Before she had well finished it, Jicko and the carriage came round. Susan tottered down the steps of the verandah, entered the carriage, and so quitted Lieutenant Carnegie's roof for ever.

Within a week, she was in her berth, on board the good ship, which was ploughing the waves on its way to England. And that was all the recompense and the satisfaction that Susan Chase obtained from her well-intentioned but ill-starred visit to Barbadoes.

(To be concluded.)



ON VANITY.

PRIDE and vanity, though differing in their first origin, often intermingle and become indistinguishable in their later stages. But pride much seldomer mingles with vanity than vanity rises up to pride. If we may put it so, pride is independent, self-supporting, stand-offish, and cold; whereas vanity is dependent on other's opinions, fickle, fussy, and apt to chatter of itself and its ways and claims. Pride will not listen to flattery, and in few cases will it condescend to bestow it. Vanity is constantly on the search for it, and adopts all devices to gratify itself in this direction, and is indeed apt at flattery with a hope of return in kind. All courtiers are more or less vain—only some of them are, in the true sense, proud, because pride is not well content to stoop and bow and flatter. Mortified pride will sometimes give way to vanity, and vanity gratified will sometimes shake hands with pride. But the obtaining distinction between pride and vanity is that pride concentrates certain of the faculties which vanity dissipates—will and affection in particular. The proud man may be strong in will, and may love deeply, intensely. The vain man can scarcely do so; his absorption in himself in a small way is so complete; and both strong will and love imply a power of going out of self towards some other object. The proud man also may be capable of great self-denials which the vain man never can. Dante, for example, was a proud, but certainly not a vain man, and the same might be said of Milton and of Wordsworth. On this last point it has been well said: "A vain man is so busy in bowing and wriggling to catch fair words from others that he can never lift up his head into true pride. Pride, in former ages, may have been led in too good repute—vanity is so now. Pride, which is the fault of greatness and strength, is sneered at and abhorred—to vanity, the froth and consummation of weakness, every indulgence is shown. . . . Vanity is unable to stand except by leaning on others, and is careful, therefore, of giving offence; nay, is ready to fawn on those by whom its hopes are fed." "Many men," says another, "spend their lives in gazing at their own shadows, and so dwindle away into shadows thereof." These are the vain ones. Shakespeare, in *Richard II.*, thus appraises vanity, with the same thought prominent in his mind:

"Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,
Consuming means, soon preys upon itself."

"Who wants to see a masquerade? might be written under a looking-glass," says one of the Brothers Hare; and this, we add, might be taken for a motto to vanity.

In Mrs. Henry Wood's *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*—a story which is as remarkable for fine character-study as for quickness of invention—we have contrasted studies in the proud and the vain character. Lady Jane Chesney, with her devotion, reserve, fine reticence, and keen self-appreciation, was in the best sense proud. Lady Laura Carlton, flighty, changeable, suspicious, yet dependent on others' estimates of her, was essentially vain; and in the whole of the present-day fiction you would hardly find a pair of more truly contrasted natures, yet with a vague underground of family likeness which makes the matter all the more artistically true.

Sometimes Lord Tennyson has used the word "pride" when he had more in his eye the attributes of vanity, as when, in the "Idylls of the King," he makes Earl Yniol say:

"And since the proud man often is the mean ;"

for meanness is much more possible in alliance with vanity than with pride. And when, in "Laury Clara Vere de Vere," he makes the hero say :

"Your pride is yet no match for mine—
Too proud to care from whence I came,"

we really have a vivid contrast between pride and vanity. Lady Clara Vere de Vere's was vanity, after all, compared with the pride of the poet addressing her.

We may wind up with a short extract, as penetrating as it is well expressed :—

"Proud of his newly-acquired knowledge of the art of exhausting the contents of an egg, the well-known little boy of the apologue rushed to impart his knowledge to his grandmother, who had been for many years familiar with the process which the child had just discovered. Which of us has not met with some such instructors? I know men who would be ready to step forward to teach Taglioni how to dance; Tom Sayers how to box; or the Chevalier Bayard how to be a gentleman. We most of us know such men, and undergo, from time to time, the ineffable benefit of their patronage."

One of the inseparable accompaniments of vanity, and the note by which it can be known, is the ceaseless craving for external marks of distinction and notice. How neatly and naïvely the *Talmud* hits this; bringing it home by image to an Eastern people: "The camel wanted horns," it says, "so he lost his ears."

A. H. JAPP, LL.D.

MRS. JANZ' JAR.

IT was a scorching day. I need not have written that, if I had first remarked that it was Eastertide in Ceylon. John Janz and I were seated on the verandah of our bungalow beside the sea, smoking our hookahs, and lazily listening for the whistle of the train which was to bring our mutual friend, Henricus Vanhorst, to spend some of his holidays with us. In reality, Henricus's days were all holidays.

I must explain that at this period (many years ago now) I had lived in Ceylon for only a few months. But my friendship with John Janz was of many years' standing, for he had been educated in England. He was the son of one of the best burgher families of the island—descended from the early Dutch settlers, and displaying a full share of the characteristics of that race in the way of shrewdness and love of comfort. He and I had together bought a small cocoa-nut estate on the seashore not very far from Colombo. We intended to live on our property, and go up to town for our business there, by means of the little railway that ran along the coast. We had already settled our simple furniture, had cut the coir matting to fit the dining-room floor, and here we were, veritably smoking the pipe of peace, for we had nearly quarrelled over the hanging of our two or three pictures.

The hoarse whistle of the engine reached our ears. The train, crammed with holiday makers, rushed past our bungalow, and there was our friend waving his handkerchief from a carriage window.

The station was a little way below our house. Not many passengers alighted there. We could easily make out Henricus. He had something hanging from one hand, and he paused, giving directions, as it seemed, to one of the station functionaries. At first we thought he was not alone. Two female figures alighted from the same carriage, and kept close to his side while he talked to the native porter. Afterwards they walked beside him along the road, all three unmistakably conversing.

"Who on earth is he bringing with him?" said John Janz, mystified.

I laughed, rather significantly. For Henricus Vanhorst was a very popular young man. He was good-looking, musical, and vivacious to a degree, but I was never quite sure whether his very considerable fortune did not weigh in his favour, quite as much as these attractive qualities—especially with the ladies! So I answered, John thus:

"Some mamma and her treasure of a daughter."

"No, you are wrong," said John, much relieved. "There they

go ;" for the group paused a moment, and then parted, the two women climbing over the low wire fence, to get down to the sea. Henricus gallantly assisted them over. To do this the more gracefully, he deposited what he was carrying in the roadway, and it seemed to us as if the ladies protested against his taking this trouble, for the one to climb last stooped down and actually lifted the thing up as if to return it to him, but Henricus fluttered over it protestingly, and then handed her over the fence. He lifted his hat to them as they went off, and they looked back at him several times. This pantomime was very amusing to John and me, and we were still laughing over it when Henricus reached the verandah.

Looking dubiously at the jar which Henricus carried by its bamboo handle, John inquired anxiously after the "stores" which Henricus had been commissioned to bring. Oh, they were all right, down at the station ; our "boy" must go to fetch them at once. Then why had he troubled to bring the jar ? Because Mrs. Janz herself had given it to him to bring to her dear son, and he had faithfully promised not to let it out of his sight. It was full of pickle of her own making, fine bamboo pickle—John's especial favourite. John knew his mother's little ways, and though he himself sometimes gave them a gruff snub, he liked Henricus the better for his kindly humouring of them.

Now we had entrusted Henricus with another commission more serious than "stores," but less savoury. John and I had put nearly all our ready money into our estate, and we wanted to borrow some more to carry us along. We had deputed Henricus to negotiate a loan for us from one Schrader, a wretched old man, miser and money-lender, resident in Colombo. So when our greetings were over, and we settled down again in the verandah, a brief silence ensued, and when we met each other's eyes Henricus knew what was in our thoughts ; and he said :

"I have been able to do that little business for you. Old Schrader will let us have the money, but he asks fifteen per cent." And Henricus actually laughed.

"Then he can keep it," said I. "If it is not to be had on easier terms than that, we will do without it—somehow."

"But," answered Henricus, "the old chap was so anxious for us to take it—said he had it in the house and so on, that I thought it was best to take him at his word—and I've got the money!"

"What !" cried John Janz, "did you agree to pay fifteen per cent. interest ? You might have known we could not do it !"

Without deigning verbal answer, Henricus dived his left hand into the breast pocket of his coat, drew out a roll of notes and flung them on the table, in my direction.

"There !" he said, "you asked me to get you this money—and here it is. Why cavil about terms ?"

A new thought struck me. "Henricus," I said, 'pardon me, but

how on earth did you get this loan from Schrader without our signatures? There is some mystery in this!"

Henricus flushed deeply. He did not reply. But in a minute he rose from his lounging chair, and picked the roll of notes from the table. He undid the string which secured them, carefully counted them, and put them back into his breast pocket.

"I've fulfilled my part of our agreement," he said, with studied carelessness, "but if you don't want the money now, it can go back. Let us try a cigar. I have got a new brand which is highly recommended."

His cool manner made me feel rather ashamed of the heat I had displayed. John Janz seemed to share my feeling. We accepted the proffered cigars and puffed away in silence, which we did not break till the "boy" came up from the station with the residue of our stores.

We passed the rest of the day idling about, amusing ourselves as we could. Henricus was very boisterous, but at intervals it seemed to me that he watched me curiously, as if to divine my inmost thoughts. I did not know whether young Janz noticed anything peculiar in his manner. But after Henricus had retired to rest John said to me that we had not heard anything about the two women who had evidently travelled with him. John lazily wondered who they were, and we did not carry the conversation further.

John Janz had known Henricus Vanhorst from boyhood. My acquaintance with him dated from my arrival in the island. But his family had been well known to different relatives of mine for more than one generation. He was an orphan, and his father had left him a fair fortune, so that he was under no necessity to labour for a living. But as a certain fair Julia Paulusz had declared she would have nothing to do with a man who idled away his time and got into mischief, Henricus had become secretary and treasurer to a certain "Friend-in-need" society—an appointment for which his best qualification was a genial readiness to disburse all his salary among its needy clients.

Henricus always seemed like a big, good-natured boy; his face ever wore a sunny smile; his kind hazel eyes beamed on all; beggars blessed him as he passed them, and I have come upon him surrounded and followed by groups of juvenile mendicants.

So little business-like was he, that we felt it more wonderful he should have remembered to negotiate with old Schrader, than that he should have allowed the miser to dupe him. I could not help feeling that I had been rather hard on Henricus, who had doubtless done his best for us, *i.e.* exactly what he would have done for himself.

Old Schrader was indeed a miser of the bitterest type. He lived for his money, but nobody could tell what he lived on. John Janz had been used to declare that he prepared a broth from the bones we often saw him gather in the streets. But I judged that meal would

be too expensive, for you cannot make bones into broth without kindling a fire, and nobody had ever seen any smoke issue from Schrader's dwelling. That dwelling was shared by a miserable little boy, who seemed to represent some sort of inconsistency in the miser's family; for though the child was awfully neglected, and chiefly depended for support on the doles of the neighbours, still, why did Schrader keep him at all? The miser's wretched domicile also generally had another inmate, but that was one in no way dependent on him—who undoubtedly paid him rent, whom he perhaps regarded as some sort of able-bodied protection for his gear, and who undoubtedly took the care of his own creature-comforts into his own hands. This was the miser's nephew, a man named Reeves, well known in the little burgher community. Henricus had called on Reeves once or twice to engage his interest for the miserable little child whom Henricus had discovered among his hordes of pensioners. Reeves always expressed much sympathy, and promised to do his best, declaring however that his uncle did not like him, and resented his interference.

When we three young men met next morning, all traces of our "tiff" had vanished. Henricus and I purposed to go a-fishing. John said he should stay at home and arrange his stores. Our way to the sea lay across the railway line, and, as the early train had already brought in the daily mail from Colombo, there was a newspaper for me. Henricus walked on leisurely, and I sauntered after him, reading as I went.

There was seldom anything of surpassing interest in our paper. But to-day, as I hastily scanned the columns, my eye caught the startling heading—

"Mysterious disappearance of Mr. Schrader." It was then set forth that at 2 A.M. yesterday morning, Mr. Reeves, the nephew of Mr. Schrader, was awakened by a great noise of trampling feet. As his uncle often had clients who sought him secretly at unreasonable hours, he was not at first alarmed, but lay and listened, when he became impressed by the total absence of the usual accompaniments of loud and often angry voices, and by the profound silence which presently followed the cessation of the trampling footsteps. Thereupon he opened his door, and called his uncle's name, and getting no answer, walked down the passage to his uncle's room. He found the door wide open, the room empty and in disorder, and a pool of blood on the floor from which he could trace blood all down the passage. But his uncle was nowhere to be seen, nor the child. Reeves had at once given an alarm, and the house had soon filled with people. No constable had come on the scene for some time, in which interval, the ground round Schrader's house was hopelessly trodden by scores of footprints. No blood could be found anywhere outside the house, and all search for the miser, living or dead, had been utterly fruitless.

Here was a tragedy! As I looked up from the paper, I saw Henricus dawdling along, looking back for me, but as I raised my eyes to our bungalow I saw John Janz rush out and make after him, his face ghastly white and his eyes starting from their sockets. Henricus saw him at the same minute and stood still. It was he to whom Janz cried:

"What infernal trick have you been up to?"

"What's the matter now?" asked Henricus with his accustomed coolness.

"What! Don't you know? Then come and see!"

And he turned back and walked before us as we returned to the house. The verandah was full of the cases from which John had been unpacking his stores, and on a table stood the jar which Henricus had been so careful to carry himself from the station. It was open, and was evidently the cause of Janz' wrathful horror. I peeped into it rather gingerly, for who could tell what foolish trick a romp like Henricus would play. I was prepared for anything—except what I saw.

It was a man's head!

I stepped back with a cry. Henricus stooped forward, and exclaimed: "It is a head! It is the head of old Schrader."

I had failed to recognise it, though I had already read of Schrader's disappearance, but Henricus knew it at once.

We looked at each other in silence. John Janz was first to recover from the shock. "Is that the jar you got from my mother?" he asked in a slow cold voice.

"Yes," said Henricus; "at least, I should have sworn so five minutes ago."

"On your honour, you never touched it?"

"On my honour, I never touched it. Your mother herself came with it to the train. Your mother's boy carried it, and he put it into the carriage, while she and I took a turn on the platform. I never touched it till I lifted it from the carriage and brought it here, as you saw me."

"Well, well," said John, "whatever this means, I'm sorry poor mother should be mixed up in it."

In my excitement, and with sundry recollections seething in my mind, I turned to Henricus, looked him full in the face, and said:

"You had no hand in this, surely."

"No—none," he said, stoutly.

He uttered no reproach at the suggestion, but he met me with a glance of his kind hazel eyes, before which my own fell. Then he turned towards the terrible jar. "Poor old Schrader!" he said. "Why, I saw him myself late on the evening of the day before yesterday. So he must have been murdered since then."

"Yes," I answered, "he was murdered in the small hours of yesterday morning. You can read about it."

And while he was glancing through the newspaper report, my recollections were busy, and took on an even more sinister tinge. What was to come next?

"Dear, dear," said Henricus, dropping the paper. "Well, I'm glad I didn't part from him in anger. It will be a lesson to me. For I very nearly did. He and I had a high old time in the early part of our interview. But what are we to do?"

We could all understand the gravity of our position. I took a card from my pocket, and scribbling on it the words "Come to us at once," I called in our "boy" and despatched him therewith to my friend Joseph Diaz, one of the leading lawyers in Colombo.

Then I said, "We ought to get a little light on this before we give information to the police; so while we wait for Diaz, I hope, Henricus, that you will not take it amiss if I ask you a few questions."

"I'll answer what I can," said he quite calmly.

"Do you mind telling us what you did all day yesterday?"

"Well, I got up at six in the morning; breakfasted and bathed as I always do; wrote two or three letters; made a call; at ten was at the office; took the one o'clock train here. You know the rest."

"Then what did you do the day before?"

"In the morning I had a headache and stayed in bed till I went to office. There was very little doing till about twelve o'clock, when Mrs. Jonkless looked in. You know the Jonkless people live close by Schrader's house. She had come to tell me that the Schrader child would soon be dead of starvation and neglect, and she thought somebody ought to take the matter up. I heard all she had to say, but discounted a little, knowing the woman is a busybody and gossip. However, in the evening I went to Schrader's house and found the child sitting in the passage, crying bitterly. He told me a story of cruelty and privation almost incredible. I gave him a trifle and sent him away to buy food, and then I knocked at the door of the miser's room, where he always kept himself locked in. He was in no great hurry to admit me, and by the time he appeared, I had worked myself into such a rage over that child's misery, that I just caught him by the coat-collar and shook him. He slipped out of my clutches and went back into his room yelling for help. I rushed after him with my cane, but I bethought myself and stopped, and told him, in pretty strong language, what had brought me there. To my astonishment he seemed ready to promise anything for the future, provided I would not go back on his past treatment of his *protégé*. I got him to express willingness to pay for the child's schooling, and to let Mrs. Jonkless provide it with necessaries at his expense. Then he suddenly became quite friendly, and asked me if I would not like to borrow a little money—if not for myself, then for some friend. I have to own that it was only then that I remembered my promise to negotiate a loan for you! So I asked him his terms. And he said he would deal with me for fifteen per cent., which was five per cent.

under his usual figure. I told him I wanted none of his money, on any terms, for I would warn my worst enemy not to get into his clutches. But he made believe to treat my words as a joke, and said if I wouldn't to-day perhaps I would to-morrow. So we parted. I found Mr. Reeves hanging about the verandah, evidently listening; and no wonder! for he must have thought the house was coming down when I first made for the miser. I explained the cause of my stormy visit, and Reeves laughed, and said he was 'glad his uncle had got it hot—it always did him good.' So I came away."

At this point Henricus hesitated and flushed. So I said:

"Tell us everything, old fellow. It is not a time for delicate reservations."

"All right," answered Henricus, desperately—"so here goes. Well, after I left Schrader's, I went to call at The Grove."

John Janz and I grinned. Julia Paulusz lived at The Grove.

"Well," said Henricus, "I was talking with Cyril Paulusz and— and Julia about disguises. Julia had been reading 'East Lynne,' and she and Cyril could not realize that Lady Isabel could disguise herself so thoroughly that her husband should not know her. But I said disguises could easily pass undetected if unsuspected; and, for my own part, I would undertake to disguise myself so completely that they would never find me out, though I should say to them beforehand, 'Expect me in a few hours.' They threw down the suggestion as a challenge, and I took it up, and ran off home, laughing over the scheme and without the least idea how I should carry it out. As I reached my gate, I met the dustman going in for his evening collection. It occurred to me that here was my chance. After calling at my place, the dust-cart goes on a good deal further before it returns past my verandah, and then turns down the Green Road, where The Grove is, you know. So I called the dustman inside my house, and said that I had a joke on hand, to carry out which I should like him to call at my house on his return journey and deliver his cart into my keeping, while he could go on to the dust-pits to take charge of the cart when I should arrive there and surrender it. He was very reluctant at first, but the offer of a rupee or two made him quite agreeable. Well, my whole plan succeeded splendidly. I 'made up' so well that I trotted up and down in front of the verandah where Julia and Cyril were sitting without either of them dreaming that I was not what I seemed." And Henricus, boyishly forgetful of our awful quandary, smiled with delight at the remembrance. "But when I got to the dust-pits," he continued, "there was nobody there. And after I had waited awhile, a strange man turned up, and informed me that the carter had just cut his foot, and so had sent him, his brother-in-law, to discharge his duties. I jumped off at once, without a word, for it seemed to me that the man looked at me suspiciously, and I did not know what the carter had told him. I went home, washed and dressed, and repaired to The Grove to enjoy my triumph.

Then I returned, went straight to bed, and I have already told you all the rest."

"But now, Henricus," I cried, "what about that money?"

"What money?" he asked, quite innocently.

"Why, the money you said you had brought from Schrader," I explained. "As you say you took nothing from him, where did that come from?"

Henricus sprang up with a hearty laugh.

"That money!" he echoed. "Pshaw! that was my own. After Schrader's offer had reminded me of your requirement, I thought you might be willing to take the loan from me, as a friend, without any interest at all. But you were both so high and mighty that I funk'd explaining my little plot. There won't be any trouble over that money anyhow. The Bank knows I drew it yesterday morning just before I left the Fort."

Here was mystery with a vengeance! Only one thing was quite clear—and we had decided on that even before Joseph Diaz arrived and insisted on it—the police must be told that old Schrader's head was in Mrs. Janz' pickle-jar.

Poor Henricus! his holiday had a melancholy termination, for he spent the rest of it "under arrest." We did our best to bail him out, but all our efforts were of no avail. The police would not hear of letting him out of their clutches. It seemed to them that they had seldom caught a criminal so red-handed! And there was another mystery on hand in the continued disappearance of the child who had lived with Schrader, and had been championed by Henricus.

The total disappearance of old Schrader's body and of the starveling child were two elements of persisting bewilderment.

Joseph Diaz paid the incarcerated Henricus long visits, going carefully over every detail of his story. Reeves, old Schrader's nephew, steadily adhered to the bald details he had first narrated. When he was asked as to Henricus's evening visit to the miser, he at once admitted it, corroborating Henricus's own account, and confessing that when he was disturbed in the night, he at first thought he was dreaming of the recent row; and next, that the miser's censor had returned to the charge; in which case, said Reeves, he had felt little disposed to interrupt him, since he was thankful for any stranger's intervention between his uncle and the victim of his avaricious cruelty.

In the light of subsequent events, it puzzles me to think how certain questions were not asked, and certain inquiries strenuously pushed. I think at first we felt it too absurd to suspect Henricus, and afterwards we got into a panic lest we should not be able to defend him.

He was standing in very real peril when John Janz' mother appeared on the scene.

She was Henricus's godmother, and, unlike many who stand in that

relation, had sedulously done her duty by him. She had whipped him, taught him his catechism, tipped him, lectured him, and loved him !

Mrs. Janz was a Burgher lady of the good old school—usually taking the air in a carriage, and, on the rare occasions when she walked for a few steps, sporting a green silk parasol to screen her powdered face ; and she had never covered her head with hat or bonnet, or aught else, which would conceal her masses of elaborately plaited hair. This she wore done up behind in a large knot enclosed in a fine white silk net kept in position by a magnificent tortoise-shell comb, while above each ear were shield-like coils of hair, skewered by large silver pins with heads of filigree work. She wore short skirts spread over a huge crinoline, and displaying much white stocking. This was one of John Janz' special grievances. He was always painfully conscious of his mother's white stockings, and her comfortable feet thrust into half-slippers ; *i.e.* slippers with no heel, shuffling contrivances, intolerable to anybody with pedestrian inclinations.

A queer figure was Mrs. Janz as she sat in our verandah, her green umbrella lying beside her, while she solaced herself by picking cardamon seeds from a fancy-basket held in her lap, throwing them from the palm of her hand into her mouth with an adroit action, which was one of the triumphs of old-world Burgher etiquette. A very queer figure, but we were quite aware that in it we welcomed a guardian angel.

The first thing Mrs. Janz did was to insist on seeing her godson. We all tried to dissuade her, pleading that it would be "trying" for her, and all the other arguments by which men are apt to fetter the powers of useful women. Mrs. Janz waved us all off and she got her way.

She went into Henricus's apartment with a somewhat lugubrious countenance. She came out radiant.

She joined us in Joseph Diaz' garden, where he and I were strolling looking over notes, for work was more pleasant out-of-doors than within. The old lady plumped herself down under a bower of roses, and was silent. Then she looked us calmly in the face and said :

"I think you are all a parcel of geese !"

(We were accustomed to Mrs. Janz' frankness.)

"Has it ever occurred to your wisdom to inquire what has become of the jar I really sent ?" she asked with fine sarcasm. "Have you traced the man who took charge of the dust-cart when Henricus gave it up ? I thought not !"

I could see that Joseph Diaz was impressed by Mrs. Janz' remarks.

"Do you know anything about the two women who travelled from Colombo with Henricus ?" she went on, witheringly. "I thought not !"

"My man is still making his inquiries," pleaded young Diaz ; "if

you will dine with me to-night you shall hear the latest he has done. In the meantime good-bye ;" and without another word he hastened off.

Mrs. Janz nodded behind him. "He will set his man on the scents I have pointed at," she said ; "but he'll take the credit himself. Women never get justice."

In the course of the morning Mrs. Janz confided to me sundry details which she had questioned out of poor Henricus. From her point of view, it was natural that these should relate chiefly to her jar, and Henricus's journey from town. On the day of that journey she had driven from her house to the station in her own conveyance, with the jar on the seat beside her. She had herself handed it out to her "boy," and, while she chatted with Henricus, she had watched that functionary walk down the platform and deposit his burden in a carriage. She had not gone near the carriage herself, and, so far from having seen its occupants, she did not know whether or not there was anybody in it. Henricus had told her that when he got into the carriage the two women were already there, sitting one at either side of the door. The jar stood on the seat beside the one with her back to the engine. Mrs. Janz had entreated Henricus to throw his memory back over that journey and to adjudge no incident too insignificant to tell her. Henricus had evidently done his best to obey. He said he had exchanged a few civil remarks with his fellow-passengers. He had taken a seat facing the engine, and noticing that the lady opposite him looked pale and tremulous, he had suggested that it might be well for her to change her seat. She had consented, and in gathering up a shawl and one or two other trifles, she had also proceeded to lift the jar, he had thought, as if she feared it might be in danger of breakage if left on a seat by itself. Henricus had gallantly protested that she must not trouble herself about that ; and to give emphasis to his words crossed over to the seat she vacated, and placed himself beside the jar. He could not say the lady seemed any better for her change of position. Both the women had alighted when he did, and John Janz and I knew the rest.

All this was duly retailed to Joseph Diaz during dinner, and directly that meal was over, the lawyer summoned his "man" Swarris, the detective.

This functionary entered the room with a profound salaam for his master and me, but on seeing Mrs. Janz he clasped both his hands together and bowed his head—a mark of respect which the natives show only to the most influential. He remained in this attitude until Joseph Diaz asked him to sit down, at the same time indicating a corner where he could best make himself comfortable.

Down he squatted in true Asiatic style. We could not offer him a chair because he was a low-caste man, and to render him that civility would have affronted and scandalised the other servants.

But Joseph Diaz ordered a glass of brandy to be brought for him, at which the old man's dusky face glowed with satisfaction, while Mrs. Janz sniffed a virtuous disapproval. The "boy" brought the glass of brandy in his hand, since Swarris' caste did not allow him to receive anything off a tray.

Taking the glass from the servant, Swarris rose and turned his face to the wall so that we should not see him drink. Hiding his mouth from us with his left hand, he gulped down the alcohol, never allowing the glass to touch his lips. That done he returned the glass to the servant, and sat down again with a grunt of satisfaction and a guilty side glance towards Mrs. Janz.

"Well," said Diaz; "have you carried out my orders?"

"Yes, saar; and plenty more too, saar," he answered.

As the old man spoke three languages, and as he would employ all three to help out his powers of expression, it will be more pleasant for the reader if I construe his conversation into English, eliminating the oaths with which he garnished it, despite the daggers which gleamed in Mrs. Janz' eyes.

From Swarris' story we gathered that Joseph Diaz had directed two arrests; at least, two had been accomplished: that of Reeves, Schrader's nephew, and the dust-cart man. But Diaz had also apparently directed the arrest of the man who had taken the dust-cart after Henricus's freak, and this man Swarris had utterly failed to find.

Both prisoners, said Swarris, were utterly astonished at their arrest, and strenuously denied any guilty knowledge of the affair.

"And is this all that you have brought us to hear?" cried Mrs. Janz, flying up from her chair.

"If the big lady will only be patient," said the little man, appealing to Mr. Diaz, "I will soon show her that I have not been idle."

"Well, do be quick about it," retorted Mrs. Janz; "for I want to get home! I have not even put up my poultry for the night; and I hear that there are jackals about."

The detective narrated that after consigning Mr. Reeves and the dustman to the police-station, his attention had been directed to two women.

Mrs. Janz was on the alert.

Said the detective, "I see them walk towards Schrader's house. I follow. They go into Schrader's garden, look about everywhere, knock at door. Then they open it and go in. Then one woman comes out again and looks about; then she goes in again, and next they both come out and go towards railway-station."

"Did they take anything out of the house?" asked Mr. Diaz.

"No," said the detective. "They took a railway-ticket for W—— Station."

"Your station"—Mrs. Janz nodded to me eagerly.

We thought we had got a clue! But Swarris went on to say that

he followed the women to their destination, and found that they were two elderly maiden sisters of Mrs. Jonkless, who, interested in their sister's account of the miserable child now missing from Schrader's house, had gone over the premises to see if they could find any trace of it which might have escaped the masculine eyes of the police.

"Do you mean to say that you followed two respectable old ladies like the Miss Kauls, expecting to find them implicated in a brutal murder?" exclaimed Mrs. Janz, whose disappointment found vent in virtuous indignation.

Swarris looked at her deprecatingly. Doubtless he felt what he did not say—to wit, that had he not followed up this clue, Mrs. Janz would have been still more angry, and would have declared that nobody should have been regarded as above suspicion.

"You will be spying on me next!" fumed Mrs. Janz. "And, indeed, you have good cause, until you find my real pickle-jar!"

"Ah!" cried Swarris, with a gleam of delight, as if he should say, "Now I shall be able to please you;" and he narrated that while he was at W— Station he had made a few inquiries of the officials there, with the result that he discovered a jar of pickles had been found in a railway carriage at the terminus on the evening of Henricus's journey. He had then gone to Mrs. Janz' own house and interviewed her "boy." The "boy" remembered accompanying his mistress with the pickle-jar; he remembered putting it into the train; he was quite sure there was nobody in the carriage at the time. He could recollect where he had put the jar: he had placed it under the seat.

"The inference is," said Joseph Diaz, "that in the interval between his doing that and Henricus entering the carriage these two women got in with another jar, whose contents they knew only too well, but which Henricus naturally assumed to be the jar in his charge. They, of course, would not know of the jar under the seat; and when Henricus calmly took possession of theirs, they, under the circumstances, must have been too terrified to protest, lest some disturbance should arise, in which the horror might have been prematurely revealed."

"The hussies were only too glad to be quit of it," decided Mrs. Janz. "I knew they were not worth much when Henricus said they were good-looking. Men always say that of the wrong sort!"

Swarris had made every effort to trace the two women, but had failed. He had visited Henricus, and got a tolerably detailed description of them from him, and he eagerly accepted everything that John Janz and I could say about them. But we had only seen them from a distance, and could not say much, though Janz declared that he thought he should know them again, unless indeed they were dressed very differently.

"Where, then, is my pickle-jar?" Mrs. Janz asked.

It was at the police-station. She and her "boy" would have to swear to its identity.

There would be no difficulty about that, said the good lady, for the date when she had made the pickles was written in her own hand on the cover. Mr. Diaz ventured a little joke about her having put Henricus into a pickle and a jar as well as given him one to carry. But she scorned such remarks, and the lawyer thought to restore her good-humour by remarking that since her godson's possession of this sinister pot was the chief point against him, there was now surely enough light on the matter to ensure Henricus being let out on bail. But this only made Mrs. Janz furious.

"Bail!" she shrieked. "Bail? Why, they should let Henri out at once, and pay him smart compensation for wrongful detention. Bail! I'd give them some bail for themselves if I had to deal with them—policemen, and lawyers, and all!"

We could only remind her that nothing more could be done that night—indeed, that nothing in this world could be so good for Henricus as the undisturbed sleep which we, who knew him best, felt quite sure he was enjoying! Then we hinted to Mrs. Janz that her carriage was waiting at the door, and that we knew she would not like her horse to get a chill!

"I suppose some day I shall be allowed to have my own way," grumbled the old lady, who, like many other people who generally have theirs, was under the delusion that she was sorely put upon by her fellow-creatures.

She went away pettishly, without wishing us good-night. But we knew her little "temper" originated in her genuine concern for Henricus. Instead of returning to John Janz' bungalow at W—— I slept that night in Joseph Diaz' town-house, so as to be on the scene early next day, when, thanks to the evidence brought forward by Swarris, we did succeed in getting Henricus liberated on bail, though the charge against him was still entertained.

One singular circumstance in the mystery was the total disappearance of the miser's body! There was the head, to be sure. Was the inquest to be held upon it alone?

This was, however, what finally happened. Mrs. Janz' "boy" thereupon gave his evidence—how he had seen his mistress take the pickle-jar from the "almira," where she kept such things; how they had driven with it to the station, and he had put it beneath the seat of an empty carriage.

Mrs. Janz identified the pickle-jar which had been found unclaimed at the terminus.

The "suspect" Reeves was allowed as a witness. He admitted having heard old Schrader moving about after Henricus had gone away—or at least after he believed he had gone.

The dust-cart man was another witness. Joseph Diaz cross-examined him.

"Did you go to Schrader's late on the evening of the murder?"

"Yes."

"At whose request?"

"At Mr. Reeves'."

"Was it only rubbish which you removed?"

"Only rubbish—stuff from the garden."

"After you left Schrader's house where did you go?"

"Straight to Mr. Henricus's house, but I found him coming on the road to meet me, and I gave him charge of the cart."

"You say that then you hurt your foot, and could not go to the dusthole to take over the cart as you had promised. Whom, then, did you send?"

"A stranger who had been staying at the '*boutique*,' near my house. I have not seen him since."

This statement was accepted as fact. There was a *boutique* near the carter's house—an eating-house greatly frequented by native tramps.

No trace had been found of the missing child, or of Henricus's two female fellow-travellers. The police bore witness to their own search or the body of the murdered man. The dusthole had been emptied and carefully examined; but no disturbance of the earth, such as would be necessary to secrete a considerable bulk, could be discovered.

The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown;" and the three "suspects," Henricus, Reeves, and the dust-cart man, were all alike set at liberty, and all alike, alas! not "without a stain on their characters."

Now, before his own arrest, Reeves had made himself very active in all the proceedings, and had been very loud and indignant in the lamentations he made over the cruel murder of his poor dear uncle. Immediately after the inquest, I was called away up country on business, and it was only on my return that I learned from John Janz of the strange change now wrought on the face of circumstances.

"Some of us have been thriving during your absence," said John mysteriously. "The dust-cart man's nerves got such a shock over the inquest that he had to give up his place. But now he grows water grass, sells vegetables, has a cart of his own, and beats his wife regularly!"

"Dear me!" I answered; "what is that you insinuate?"

"Well," said Janz, with assumed nonchalance, "we've got some new neighbours near our bungalow. Two ladies. They live quietly, but comfortably; very! They have one regular visitor, and that is—Mr. Reeves!"

"Oh, I think I see the milk in the cocoa-nut now," I responded.

"And, as for the police," Janz went on, "they've changed their opinion—some of them who most misdoubted Reeves. They say he was a maligned man! I notice one or two of them have got fine new horses."

John put the last sentence into a very effective stage "aside."

"Have they ever found Schrader's body?" I asked.

"Not a trace of it," answered John; "nor a word of the child."

"Do you ever see Swarris?" I inquired. "Surely he is staunch."

"Yes," said John: "but he must not come near us just now, or else we should arouse suspicions that he is still working on the case—as he is."

A few nights later, however, Swarris did turn up. He came to see me. I was a comparative stranger in the place—a born European, and Swarris wanted me to return to town with him and sleep in his hut, and repair with him to the dusthole at daybreak. In the ordinary course of things, it was to be once more empty, and Swarris wished to seize the opportunity for a final search, and he sought my assistance that we might make the most of the time, while my appearance, if observed, might not be connected with the Schrader affair. I put myself entirely at the disposal of the old man.

After early refreshment of hot coffee and rice cakes, we started off. I could not understand why the tools with which Swarris armed us should be crowbars; but I soon knew.

We reached the plot, and Swarris went to one end and I to the other. We began our operations. Through the still air of the morning not a sound was heard, save the dull thud of the crowbars.

Our object was to pierce every foot of ground to satisfy ourselves that no hole of even moderate dimensions had been dug.

It was exhausting labour. For the soil was hard clay, and it required a vigorous stroke of the crowbar to pierce to a reasonable depth. I was beginning to get very tired and disheartened, when Swarris suddenly said that it was getting late, and we must depart, though we might come back to-morrow.

"Here goes, then, once more!" I cried; and as I did so, I wielded the crowbar with all my strength. Lo, the heavy dump was followed by a great crack, and I found myself on my knees, my hands touching the soil—for the crowbar had almost disappeared into the earth!

I called Swarris, and we both eagerly set about throwing up the earth around the spot. We came upon a board. This we removed, and behold, there was the headless body of old Schrader!

By noon the whole city was aware of the discovery. But the person who could not be found was the very one to whom everybody desired to convey the information—the dead miser's nephew, Reeves!

In a state of abject terror at the find on his former domain, the dustman, lest he should be accused of the whole, confessed his share in the crime. According to him, on the morning of the murder Reeves had called at his house and requested his aid in secretly removing some furniture from old Schrader's. There was nothing remarkable in this transaction—it had often been done before. Before he did this, however, he had met Henricus, and been induced by him to give him the temporary charge of the cart on his return

journey. The dustman had then gone on to Schrader's house, where he saw Reeves and two women. Reeves had volunteered to load the cart himself, and had sent the dustman away. When the dustman returned, he had noticed the cart contained garden rubbish, and he thought Reeves must have disposed of the furniture in the interval. Reeves came out and talked to him, and said that if he would take the cart on its usual round, Reeves himself would meet the cart at the dusthole, and let the dustman away for a holiday. The dustman thought Reeves had some more business he wished to transact privately. Then he suddenly remembered the arrangement he had made with Mr. Henricus. When he explained this to Reeves, Reeves was at first very angry, but presently he calmed down, on the women's suggesting that if he disguised himself carefully, he could take over the cart with no fear of detection, since Henricus would surely be too much occupied with his own freak to take particular notice of an unknown dustman. The dustman had accordingly delivered over his cart to Henricus, and then gone straight home and stayed there. Next morning, before he had even heard of the murder, one of the women called at his place and gave him a large sum of money, telling him he would soon know what it was for, and there would be plenty more if he showed himself a sensible man. When he heard of the murder, he knew what all the mystery was. But he was deep in Reeves' debt. Reeves had never since pressed for his money, but, on the contrary, had regularly sent him a monthly present.

The two women confessed to having helped in the disposal of the body. Notwithstanding their good looks and stylish dresses, they were two miserable creatures, mere tools of the vice and violence of the villain Reeves. They had arrived in Schrader's house only after the miser was dead—at least so they declared. It was they who originated the idea of removing the head in a jar, as they thought that would lessen the chances of identification. Their plan had been to take it to W——, and get rid of it on the sea-shore. They had got into an empty carriage, little dreaming that another jar almost identical in appearance was already under one of the seats. Henricus's coolly taking possession of that which they knew held so terrible a secret, had mystified them, shaken their nerves, and scattered their wits.

Reeves was never seen again alive. A week after the discovery of old Schrader's body, old Manika, the wife of the toll-keeper at the bridge of boats, finding her stock of fuel running short, went one morning to collect some of the wood which constantly floats down the river, and is arrested by the boats which support the bridge. Entangled among the wood, she found the mangled and unrecognisable body of a man. Horrified whispers reported that this explained the end of the murderer, who would have let the innocent suffer rather than reveal his crime.

The two women spent the greater portion of their remaining days in making coir rope in one of the local prisons. The dust-cart man,

as a convict, helped in the building of the noble breakwater which encloses the grand harbour of Colombo.

It was months afterwards when an old native woman, leading a little boy by the hand, presented herself at the house of worthy Mrs. Jonkless. The child flew into the open arms of the old neighbour who had always been kind to him. It was the orphan who had so mysteriously disappeared from the Schrader household. Within an hour or two of the murder, Reeves had expeditiously and secretly despatched him to a remote village, whose inhabitants were little likely to hear of anything going on in or near the capital. For a long time the old woman who took charge of the boy had received sums of money, from whom she knew not. With the death of Reeves, and the imprisonment of his confederates, these, of course, had ceased, and then, acting on information received from the little lad himself, the old dame brought him back to the scenes of his miserable early life.

It transpired that he was the orphan grandchild of an old friend of Schrader's. This friend had lived in the up-hill country, and had known nothing of the bad character or the great wealth which the miser had gradually—and simultaneously—acquired. Believing Schrader to be an honest hard-working man, this friend had made him guardian of the orphan child, and administrator of his own fortune.

So the poor little waif became an affluent lad, passing through the "forms" of the Royal College, and spending his holidays with Mrs. Jonkless and Mrs. Janz. As for the latter lady, we may safely say she lived "happy ever after," since she never again lacked a grievance, for whenever a fresh one failed, she returned to that which was perennial—the bitter injustice which rendered no compensation to her beloved godson Henricus for the insult and torture of the suspicions to which he had been subjected. That injustice gave her ample excuse henceforth to "spoil" Henricus in every way she could think of; such excuse being always specially dear to those worthy souls who—without it—would be compelled by their consciences to be didactic and disciplinary!

OSMAN:
AN INTERLUDE.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "THE BRETONS AT HOME," ETC., ETC.



THE reality certainly exceeded all one had ever imagined in the way of moonlight scenes. We stood on one of the highest minarets in this City of the Dead. A profound silence and stillness reigned. The voice of the Muezzin had long ceased to echo through the startled air; nay, ere many hours, he would once more send forth his warning, and bid the faithful arise and worship and give thanks for the dawn of a new day. "Prayer is better than sleep! Allah! Allah! Allah! There is no God but God."

The thoroughfares below us were in darkness. No lights gleamed here and there as in a city of the living. What need of light in this city of the dead? No movement disturbed the solemn repose; no voice ascended, no footstep echoed through the lengthy corridors and spacious courts. We were alone, at midnight, amidst the Tombs of the Caliphs.

In the sky above us a full moon was riding with inconceivable majesty. We watched her silent course as she ascended high and higher yet, flooding the earth with her pale, silvery light. All was changed by this magic light into a new world.

A more poetical scene could not exist. The Tombs of the Caliphs were at our feet. Below those great domes the Mameluke Sultans

for centuries had been sleeping their last long sleep. No colossal pyramids, indestructible as time itself, had been erected for them, yet they slept as safely and soundly as those whose monuments had been the work of a lifetime. From our standpoint we traced the outlines of domes and minarets, of courts and pillared quadrangles, as clearly as at midday.

But the effect was far different, more enchanting, more in harmony with the spirit of the place. The lights and shadows were deep and distinct, but cold and lifeless. The whole world around us was refined and beautified. Crumbling ruins, touched by the pale moonlight, were ruins no longer, but exquisite monuments destined to last for ever. Here and there the light fell upon the windows of a mosque tomb, where a Mameluke Sultan reposed in his well-kept sarcophagus : a regal chamber of the dead given to few. The moonbeams showed up the windows with cold but exquisite effect. The interior might have been illumined with ghostly torches : the pale, subdued rays of a dim religious light : the very light for a requiem. A solemn service might have been going forward ; a service for the sleeping dead, with all the Mohammedan ritual ; all the strange gestures and ceremonial prescribed by the False Prophet. The exquisite music, the inspired Liturgy of our own service, drawing the soul upwards, and bringing with them conviction and consolation—all was wanting. The Mohammedans know nothing of this.

Nothing could have been more wonderfully impressive. Near us uprose the Citadel ; so clearly marked that from the walls we could see a solitary sentinel gazing outwards, the steel of his bayonet flashing in the moonlight. Above it the Mosque of Mohammed Ali stood out in all its grandeur of outline. At our feet, stretched Cairo itself, with its endless thoroughfares, and innumerable flat roofs : a sleeping world. All its famous mosques, with their domes and minarets, were distinctly visible. Far beyond, we seemed to catch, here and there, the flashing of the moonlight upon the windings of the sacred river. Yet beyond, so clear was the atmosphere of this Eastern night, so vivid the light thrown by the moon, we faintly traced the outlines of the Great Pyramids, and imagined the Sphinx on guard at their feet. Finally, stretching into an infinity of space invisible to us, lay the boundless desert, leading to other worlds.

To go backward a moment.

We had had a delightful evening. Osman had been more entertaining than ever ; full of conversational power, full of reminiscences. A keen observer of humanity, he possessed a fund of anecdotes and recollections bearing upon the strength and weakness, the absurdities and sublimities, the contradictions of mankind. An intense lover of Nature, he had travelled the world over for his own pleasure and profit. With the aid of a retentive memory he spoke of scenes so vividly that as the words fell from his lips we saw the places described.



OLD STREET IN CAIRO.

The repast, light in character, was distinguished by all the refinement he had at his command. Egyptian dishes, which were revelations to us, he had made purposely prominent. Dark servants in rich Oriental costume served us with the quietness and ease of long training. In the centre of the table a small fountain threw up waters just sufficiently perfumed to freshen the atmosphere. Sparkling wines bubbled up in jewelled glasses : and Egyptian coffee was served to us in cups of Sèvres placed in stands of pure gold of the most exquisite filigree work.

There was a singular repose upon everything. The apartment was rich and large, costly in its decorations, faultless in taste. Works of art hung upon the walls, specimens drawn from the best European painters. Influenced probably by what Osman had told us of his magical appliances in Constantinople, every moment we seemed to fancy that the walls would recede and disappear and disclose some gorgeous scene, some gay and festive crowd. But no such startling change awaited us. Though everything about us seemed to border upon the magical, all was well without the bounds of the supernatural.

"No ; I said we should have no magic here," laughed Osman in answer to a remark we had made or a glance of inquiry he had rightly interpreted. "That we must leave for other scenes than these, or for the pages of the *Arabian Nights*. The Easterns, you know, love gorgeousness and magnificence. It is born with them, and, where it can be obtained, seems as necessary to them as food and raiment. They possess a fervent imagination which is boundless in its conceptions and desires. Nature herself is their instructor. These Eastern skies in the twenty-four hours of the day will reflect all the colours of the rainbow. What can be more exquisite than the unbroken blue of our heavens, even if a little monotonous ? Look at the flood of gold that is for ever poured down upon our hills and plains, painting our vegetation with the most vivid and flaming tints, giving our houses and monuments a dazzling glow, an indescribable warmth. We are steeped in colours, which, evident as they are, can never be vulgar, for they are the handiwork of Nature. It is well that the Easterns have this imagination, which is the heritage of all, not merely of the great or favoured few. True, it makes life more or less of a dream ; an illusion ; a will-o'-the-wisp for ever goes before them luring them on to green pastures and longed-for oases ; hope is strong and for ever holds out enchanting promises. They are always about to grasp happiness ; and in the pursuit of the phantom actually possess something of the reality. A false life, and unwholesome, some would say ; but I hardly think so. It leads to no evil, it checks no efforts ; whilst their imagination adds to their religious fervour, and more often than you would imagine to their self-restraint. If they live in a fool's paradise, where is the harm ? When old age comes upon them, hope dies and imagination has lost its fervency ; illusions are over ; the paradise of this world



BLIND BEGGAR IN STREETS OF CAIRO.

has proved a mockery ; but they are then so near the paradise of the next that they can bear the disappointment. And now, as it grows late, let us go to our true magic of the evening : our Tombs of the Caliphs, our City of the Dead, bathed in the light of that dead world which still exists for our benefit. If mankind would only learn a lesson from the economy of Nature ! ”

At this moment, a dark Oriental servant, who had not before entered the room, appeared, and, advancing towards Osman with an Eastern salutation, spoke a few words in Arabic.

“ The carriage waits to conduct us to fairyland,” cried our host. “ We are ready. I have no need to ask, *Is it moonlight ?* That is an anxiety unknown to Orientals. Here the clouded exceptions are so rare that we think of them only when they come. And now for our magic.”

We passed out into a silvery world. A flood of pure white light threw its calm but ghostly influence upon all around. Every object was brought out distinctly, but softened and refined. The streets of Cairo were silent and abandoned, and but for the moon would have been in darkness. Only here and there did some poor Egyptian, with flowing abba and noiseless step, flit past like a phantom, drawing his scanty garments closer to him. He found the night air chilly, whilst to us it was balmy and refreshing. Not that the nights are always so, even in this favoured clime ; there are times when the clear night atmosphere falls to a degree which reminds a European of his own colder regions. But whilst this means almost an added pleasure to him, to the Egyptian it means absolute pain and suffering. The climate has changed in Europe ; cold and discomfort are no longer unknown in the regions of the Riviera, the sunny islands of the Levant, the relaxing shores of Algeria ; who, then, can tell how soon Egypt itself may cease to be a land where we may escape winter ?

As we turned into the Mouski and passed up the long narrow thoroughfare, the contrast between the day and night scene was startling.

The restless, ever-shifting crowd had disappeared ; not one was left to tell the tale. The moon threw deep lights and shadows upon street and houses. Here and there a solitary dog was hunting for its supper, now and then stopping to look at its shadow as if it were something that had no business to be there. Outside some of the doorways, a Fellah was stretched on a rough sort of bed, curled up into what looked like a bundle of linen, in this way guarding his master's premises like a faithful hound. It was curious to see them, and one realised how little of this world's favours contents them. Their mind might well be a continual feast, though probably it is only resignation to the inevitable which makes them so enduring, and comparatively happy.

No need of outrunners to-night. The Mosque of Hassan, as we passed, looked wonderfully imposing. Its huge doorway was in



SAÏS RUNNING BEFORE A CARRIAGE.

shadow; all was closed and silent; its great courts within were deserted, and we pictured to ourselves the deep shadows of the pillars cast by the moonlight across the sacred pavement.

The incompleted Mosque opposite stood out as a beautiful object in semi-ruin. Wide and deserted looked the Place Roomeleh as we turned into it out of the narrower thoroughfare. All the picturesque groups had taken flight. Men, camels, and stalls—everything had departed. Empty space, solemn silence, brilliant moonlight showing up the very stones; a pale, cold, pure effect, out of which uprose the wonderful dome and minarets of the Mosque of Hassan, outlined in majesty and grandeur against the dark night sky: the moonlight throwing all into the most vivid lights and shadows. Above us rose the Citadel also, with the Mosque of Mohammed Ali, which, seeming to touch the skies, looked a celestial vision.

And then we passed into the regions of the Tombs of the Caliphs, leaving the carriage where we had left it in the morning.

No danger of the night wind injuring the horses, or causing discomfort to the waiting servants. They might sleep away the hours without fear of ill. The midnight air breathes no fever; the horses were too well trained to move. We found ourselves in this City of the Dead, sole representatives of the living. Our shadows fell upon the pale uneven thoroughfares, mingling with other shadows cast by broken walls and silent tombs, by lofty domes and slender minarets. A silence of death reigned everywhere. Nor distant jackal, nor hooded owl—night's shrieking harbinger—disturbed the utter stillness. A City of the Dead: a Dead City—the words meant so much to-night—were so vividly realised.

Presently we reached a particular minaret, and in the shadow of the doorway stood a ghostly object.

We started at the first instant; for our minds, filled with thoughts of Death and the Unseen, almost looked upon this apparition as a visitant from the land of shadows. Osman, interpreting the movement, touched our arm and smiled, enjoying our momentary surprise. We were evidently expected. The ghostly custodian, with a reverence ghost never yet assumed, silently opened the door. We passed through to the staircase: without sound the door closed again; a glimmering light, cast one knew not how or whence, faintly guided our steps; the ghostly custodian disappeared; no word had been uttered. Finally we found ourselves at the goal of our desires—the balcony running round the summit of the minaret.

Of the view that met our gaze we have already spoken.

All that was beautiful in night and Nature was there. The scene was the very essence of poetry; and the effect was immeasurably heightened when we remembered that what we looked upon was almost holy ground: the Land of Egypt. Perhaps the very spot on which our minaret stood had been trodden by the Holy Family in their flight. They must at least have passed near to it. We can imagine the

emotions of Joseph as he guided the ass on which sat his wife and the young Child. We know how full of mystery the whole drama must have been to his simple and unlearned mind : for he was only a carpenter. But his faith seems to have been as strong and trusting as that of Abraham. He was warned of God in a dream ; that was sufficient ; he went forward nothing doubting. The Virgin probably was vouchsafed a supernatural strength ; and as far as was necessary, a revelation even beyond that announced to her by the Angel. Otherwise her human nature could scarcely have borne the sense of mystery, the strange incomprehensible events, of which she was the centre, and which were altogether beyond her understanding. She could only look on with awe, and dimly feel the greatness and majesty of her charge. Then, as to-night, the stars must have shone mysteriously in the dark canopy above them, the moon have given them her light.

In those days there were no Tombs of the Caliphs, no Modern Cairo, no Citadel. All this did not arise for centuries after. But there were the Pyramids, which had already existed for thousands of years : and at their base this Holy Family may have paused to take refuge from a sandstorm, or shelter from the noonday sun. And there the sacred river ran as it runs to-day. To the main features of the landscape the rolling centuries had brought no change.

To-night we saw it all softened by this wonderful flood of moonlight. Everything immediately around us was subdued to that veiled and shadowy outline which is the height of beauty and poetry in a landscape. Imagination at once takes up her work, and endows the scene with all the charms, all the romance and perfection that might be there ; that often are there ; certainly were there to-night. We gazed in silence and wonder. Osman, more intent upon charming us than pleasing himself, keenly enjoyed our recognition of the magic he had promised us.

"What did I say?" he cried at length, in tones hardly above a whisper, yet far reaching in that wonderful air, that intense quietness. "Have I kept my word? Does not for once reality exceed anticipation? Could anything be more wonderful, more unearthly than this? Can you believe that it is the same scene on which we were gazing twelve hours ago? You who have seen the Alhambra by moonlight, have looked upon sleeping Granada at its feet, the wide plains of the Nevada beyond, the distant chain of snow mountains, have listened to the silvery irrigation bells of the valleys—was it all superior or even equal to this? There you had no City of the Dead to thrill you with its silence and mystery and sadness. All of death there was an historic past, matchless in point of interest as far as it goes, but falling short of the element which appeals most to the soul—the mystery of our passage through the Dark Valley. Here everything reminds us of this : we seem to be at its very portals. Here the living have moved in crowds, but all have passed away. It is an abandoned spot,

where the wild beasts of the forest might almost take refuge as from the haunts of men. And all about us lie the dead who once were great and powerful and feared. Under almost every dome sleeps a warrior who was a man of valour and a king. But the mighty are fallen; Time's devastating dust is all that remains of their glory: that and a tradition. Look at those crumbling walls, so refined by the moonlight; are they not pictures of infinite beauty? See those wonderful domes and minarets so distinctly outlined against the dark sky. They almost seem endowed with speech, so evident, so forcible is the tale they tell. What a vast expanse it all appears under the moonbeams! How unutterable is the deathlike silence! Not a bird disturbs the air; not a leaf seems to whisper in yonder trees. Mark those courts and quadrangles; the mysterious shadows cast by the pillars, where the moonlight touches them; those silent fountains, dried up and neglected, where once the faithful washed before they worshipped. How cold and dead it all lies under the moonlight, how silent and solitary and forlorn! What a true Dead City!"

We felt all and more than all he uttered with so much delight and enthusiasm. It was an experience we would not have missed, and it was due to Osman alone that we were there. Perhaps no one else in that vast city had stood at this witching hour where we now found ourselves. No one thought of these things, few cared for them. Poetry and romance are dying out under the pressure of realities. Time has become too short for what has to be done, and dreams, even the most charming, must be set aside.

For a time we were silent, gazing upon the matchless scene, each occupied with his own thoughts; each profoundly influenced in his own way.

To us it was a new world and a new experience, calling up a chain of emotions hitherto unborn; to Osman it was merely adding a link to a chain he had been forging more or less all his lifetime: the study of Nature, the contemplation of the beautiful; an earnest search after the sublime, all that elevates and is sacred. It found its reflection in his countenance; these influences always do; and to look into the clear depths of his eyes was to see the unmistakable evidence of a soul pure and untainted: he was of those who keep themselves unspotted from the world.

And yet few lived more essentially in the world than he.

Also, he saw all sides of human nature. Too often he had to discover that the motives which influence men are ignoble and self-interested. He had to play the part of a diplomatist, which is so frequently to say one thing and mean another; to shield thoughts and intentions behind an ambiguity of speech, which long indulged in at last distorts the mind, and brings about an obliquity of the moral vision. At length it is purposely cultivated and becomes a fine art to the possessor. Machiavel was wont to say that up to the age of discretion and independence, he was singularly frank and open



A KAWAS.

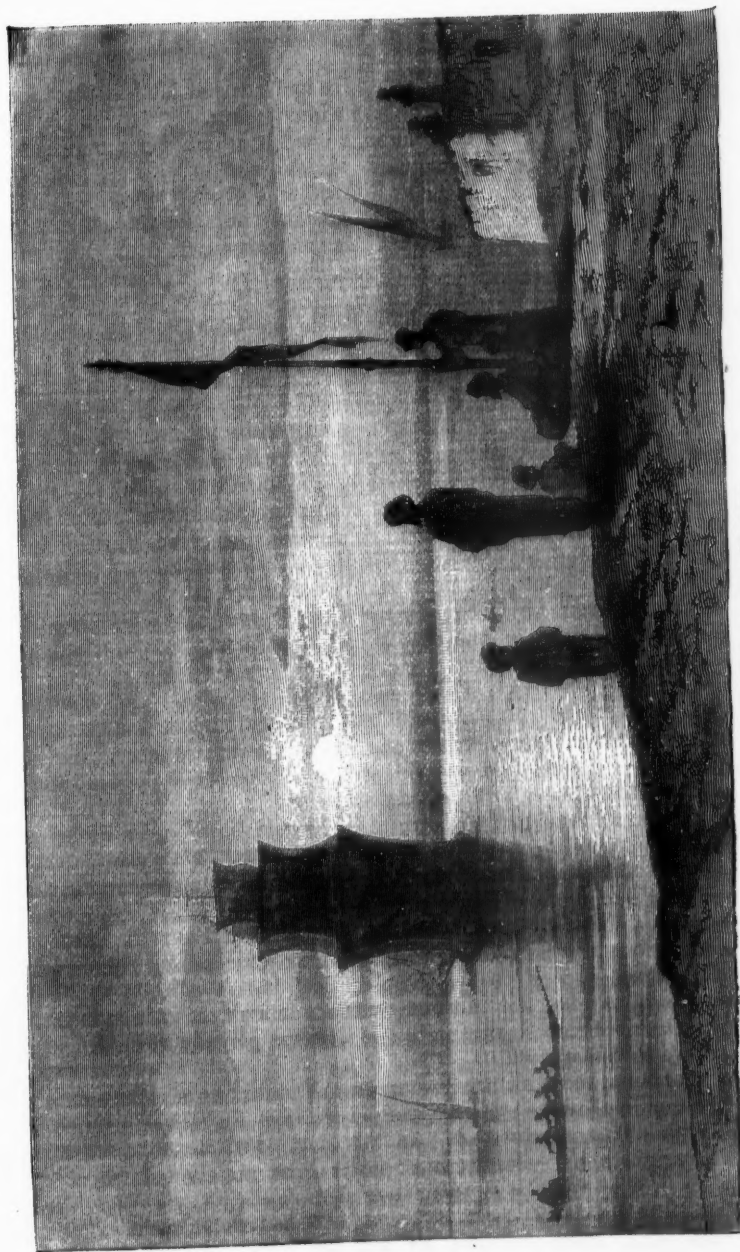
abhorred equivocation ; but finding that truth and candour made him enemies and retarded his social advancement, he began little by little to conceal his thoughts, until he ended in being one of the most accomplished deceivers of his or of any age. Vagueness and falsehood became more natural to him than directness and truth. He delighted in mystifying his audience. He felt that it was a power, and it became his second nature. But the soil must have been there in the first instance ready to receive the seeds of deception which he sowed.

It was never so with Osman.

He had steered clear of the worst faults of a political and diplomatic life. Under any circumstances it would have been the same ; there are natures in the world who can no more stifle conscience or turn aside from the straight path, than the earth can cease to turn or the sun to shine. Of these was Osman. But he had begun life under singularly favourable circumstances. His father had been great before him. He was brought up in the very atmosphere of the diplomatic world, of court life. Especially truthful from childhood, and singularly observant, he had been present when a young boy at many an informal cabinet-council in his father's house : for the father, greatly attached to his son, loved to have him about him at all times and seasons. Quiet, apparently absorbed in study, seated apart, the boy would hear and inwardly digest many things that seemed entirely beyond his years and comprehension. If his father quitted the room for a moment, leaving two councillors together, he would often hear things said in direct opposition to what had gone before, sometimes meaning treason to the absent host. Such treachery, only too often taken for granted by those of riper years, awoke anger and revolt in his young and earnest mind. He determined that if in after-life diplomacy should be his lot, it should never be at the sacrifice of conscience and principle.

And he had kept his resolution. After-familiarity with the crooked ways of life had not created in him indifference to them. Familiarity never bred contempt. It is understood that he did not wear his heart upon his sleeve, or turn to his opponents the faces of the cards he held ; with the harmlessness of the dove had to be combined the wisdom of the serpent ; the misfortune is that the combination too often part company, and the dove takes her flight ; but Osman had kept his uprightness through the most dangerous and trying period of life, and he would not fail now.

We have said that he was singularly favoured ; his lines had been cast in pleasant places. Of princely fortune, of the highest birth, a friend of the most exalted personages of more than one realm, he was at all times above the frowns and smiles of fortune. Higher rank he could not gain, and of wealth he had more than abundance. He was the only child of his father, a man of clear judgment and vast powers of mind, who had added to his already great wealth by



NIGHT ON THE EGYPTIAN SHORES.

successful speculations, for the most part known only to himself and his agents.

All this Osman had inherited. He had stepped into his place in life, when ready for it, naturally and without effort.

His father's idol and companion, he had had from the commencement the full benefit of matured wisdom and experience, poured out upon his receptive faculties without stint or reservation, with all the unflinching charm and power inseparable from intense affection. It had been everything to him. The impulse and enthusiasm of early days, often leading, in others, to failure and mistake, were counteracted by his father's wisdom.

When the day came—as it comes to all—that he had to walk alone and his father had passed out of this life, he had gained the wisdom necessary to the emergency. His judgment and discretion became so well known, so relied on, that they became proverbial. He could do and dare what many others never dreamed of attempting. Where his sense of right did not accompany the matter to be arranged or carried through, he invariably withdrew, and neither the assumed displeasure of his sovereign nor the persuasions of his friends ever moved him. The consequence was that in the end they turned to him ever with greater favour, more enduring esteem.

The death of his father was the second great sorrow of his life. Yet we have seen, in one of our earlier chapters, how widely they differed from each other.

Both had the same strong sense of integrity and uprightness: Osman had only inherited this: both were gifted with intellects of unusual power; but whilst the one was all prose, the accomplished diplomatist, the finished courtier, with sympathies only for his office and order, the other, at heart, was all poetry.

Osman, in a less active sphere of life, would have been a writer of romances, as he had ever been a devourer of them. He was intimately acquainted with the best fiction and poetry of all countries, and could read all fluently in the original. Shakespeare he knew better than ourselves, and Scott not less well. Homer had been his constant companion, and he could quote page after page of the lighter but elegant and flowing Dante. The musical Italian syllables that fell from his lips were clear and pure as Dante himself could have uttered them. His French—greatest test of all—was perfect; in his English he was seldom at fault.

In his boyhood, his father—to whom, if romance and poetry meant nothing, intellect and culture were everything—had closely watched his training and education. In that one point alone he was firm almost to severity—the boy must never shirk his allotted tasks. A tutor from four of the representative countries of Europe lived in the palace, and a certain portion of every day had to be spent in study with each, from the time he was ten years old. He grew up

intimately familiar with four languages besides his own. Happily his brain was equal to the strain.

But he had long hours of relaxation. Frequently his father would take him away for a week at a time on short excursions, when work was abandoned and the youthful mind was allowed to relax its discipline and lie fallow—only to take up its tasks again with renewed zeal. Study came to him naturally and without trouble; his mind was both retentive and recollective: and whilst most minds possess one of these essential faculties, few are gifted with both. His memory was admirable, and in every possible way had been cultivated and strengthened by early training.

The delight he took in his father's companionship was singular, considering their differences of taste.

In no way did the father minister to the romantic side of his son's nature. One recreation in common they had: both were unusually good chess-players, and many of their leisure hours, year after year, were spent in this lordly and most intellectual of games. They were well matched, but the father was the stronger of the two, as he was the greater diplomatist.

Then when the battle was over, the father would take up an abstruse work on political economy, the life of some great statesman, or the history of some fallen country. In all cases he would find out the weak spot in the armour; and without self-conceit or pride of intellect would say, and say truly: "Had I been there, the course of the world would have been altered." He possessed the self-confidence of all really great men, unalloyed by self-consciousness. One fault he had: a certain hardness of nature which so often accompanies those who have large experience of human nature and have to see it from many sides. He had no pity for failure, and he was absolutely merciless upon fraud.

But the son, the chess game ended, the battle lost and won, instead of taking up a work on *The Economy of Power*, *The Fate of Nations*, or *The Influence of Purpose*, would fly to a romance or a poem and completely lose himself in the world of imagination. It did not please his father, but he was wise enough to allow a son so obedient in all essential matters to follow the bent of his nature in his recreations.

Osman had inherited his romantic disposition, his love of poetry, his intense appreciation of the beauties of Nature, from his mother.

She had been a Greek, the daughter of one of the chief families of that fallen but ever interesting country. Lovely as a vision, and pure and good as she was beautiful, she had met Osman the elder at the age of eighteen. He fell passionately in love with her. If ever sentiment and romance awoke within him, it was for the brief period of their wedded life; for in spite of opposition, of differences of religion, he overcame all obstacles with his accustomed power, and they were married. To his credit be it recorded, that though the

laws of his country permitted it, he never had any other wife, and after her death was true to her memory, and remained a widower.

"And for this alone," said Osman, in one of our many conversations, the tears of emotion in his voice—"for this alone, if for nothing else, my father will ever dwell in my heart as the prince and king of all men I have ever known. But I do not wonder at his devotion. Though I was only ten years old when my mother died, I remember her as distinctly as though it had been yesterday: remember her as the best and loveliest of women. Our household was not like an Eastern household, nor was it governed by any of the foolish laws of the country. My father, with his accustomed independence of character, his contempt for all rules and regulations that did not harmonize with his views, threw conventionalities to the wind, and became a law unto himself. When he married it was understood that for his wife there should be no harem, no dwelling within circumscribed limits, no disguising head-dresses. She was to be free to follow her own religion; free to come and go where she would and when she would. She dressed as she pleased, and received her husband's guests just as any other European lady would have done.

"You must remember that my father was in a position second to none—his sovereign excepted. The only singular result was that his example did not create a revolution in our senseless manners and customs. The men who came to our house were charmed and fascinated by the graceful and gracious lady who took the lead at her husband's receptions, and by her tact and influence brought out all that was best in them, and made them feel themselves better men than they were. For what is so elevating as to come into familiar contact with a good and beautiful woman? But few have the courage or even the desire to bring about reforms. Nothing is stronger than tradition, and laws are less binding than habits. When they came of an evening, my mother would often sing and play and charm them into forgetting time and place and the fever of politics. They would lose themselves in the world of melody. She excelled in both accomplishments. Her voice was one of the sweetest ever heard, and she threw into it all the poetry and purity of her nature. Had she been of humbler birth, she might have become one of the stars of earth. A less trying fate was reserved for her. For ten years she reigned the idol of my father's heart, the queen of his home. For ten years there was such happiness in that house as few have ever known, as never lasts for any. It is not too much to say that my father dwelt in an earthly paradise. Then came the end, and that lovely voice was summoned to join the celestial choir; that pure and perfect soul was taken to a world where she would find more souls in unison with her own."

He paused a moment. His eyes looked far away into space. Even now the recollection of scenes long past profoundly affected



CAIRO FROM THE NILE.

him, but the emotion was mental. The time had gone by for the outward and visible signs of grief.

He continued :

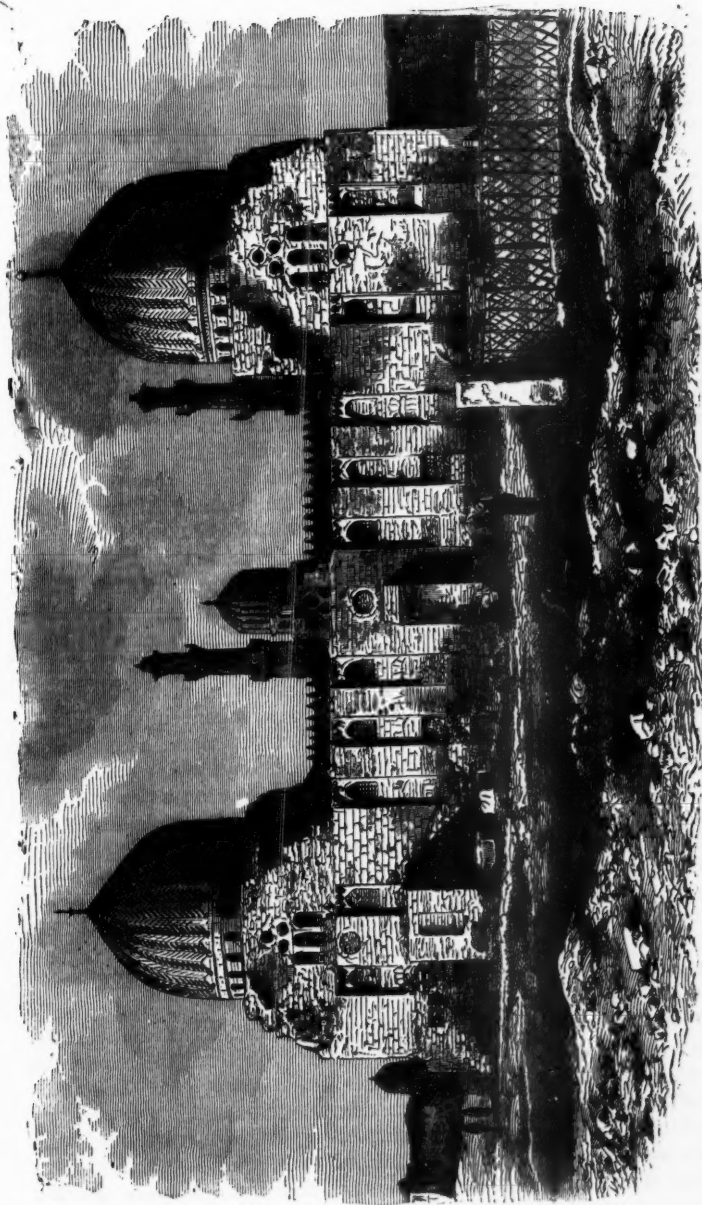
"I remember it well. The night before there had been one of my father's many assemblies. I need not say that only men were present. My mother reigned alone, as she ever did. Shielded by my father's power and attention, she never felt herself awkwardly placed. From the very rarity of the experience, my father's guests ever treated her with profound veneration. It was, indeed, not less than they felt for her.

"She had charmed them with her singing and playing. She was unusually brilliant that night, and my father has told me that she felt strangely and peculiarly happy. More than once she had whispered to herself during the evening : 'This unspeakable, unusual emotion that I feel—what is it? Can such happiness last? Is something about to happen?' What are these moods which come over us all at times when some great change is about to take place ; this shadow that is cast before a coming event ; these presentiments or premonitions which might be taken as warnings, yet are seldom heeded ?

"That night, singularly to relate, I had been allowed to sit up until the very end of the evening. Buried with a book in a distant arm-chair, from which I could see and hear everything, yet attracted no attention, for once my father seemed to have forgotten my existence. It was always he who gave the signal for my departure.

"When all was over, and the last guest had left, and a silence had fallen upon the immense rooms, I remember seeing my mother suddenly cross to my father, and, placing her head upon his breast and a hand upon each shoulder, whisper forth that she was full of a strange happiness, a strange presentiment. To which he replied that she had never been dearer to him than at that moment, never more brilliant in voice and mind than on that evening, and—it had struck him more than once—never so lovely. Hers was indeed a loveliness not only material, but spiritual. Then he suddenly caught sight of me in my far-off corner, and started with awakened memory. 'Past midnight and yet up !' he cried. 'Where have my thoughts been ?'

"Where indeed? Do these things happen by chance? Is not the smallest event of life under the direction of that Providence that shapes our ends? Was this unusual oversight of my father's not specially designed in order that I might have the recollection of that night for the whole of my after-life? It has never left me. In many a sad hour it has consoled me as no other thought or recollection could have done. No ; these things do not happen ; they are ordered. 'My darling,' cried my mother, 'you have lost your beauty sleep. To-morrow we shall see languid movements and heavy eyes.' Then turning to the volume I still held in my hand, she smiled to see that it was a romance : literature so much after her own glowing heart and imaginative mind. I was the idol of



TOMB-MOSQUE OF BARKOOK.

both their hearts ; a link binding them to each other more firmly and closely, if anything could make that possible.

"The next morning my mother heard of a terrible case of misery and distress in a family in which she was much interested. Only the European ladies in the capital occupied themselves at all in visiting the poor. Things are not altogether with us as they are with you. Ought not the presentiment of the previous night have warned her of danger? But presentiments seldom avert the calamities they fore-shadow. She went, nothing doubting. Possibly she had forgotten last night's experiences, or they never recurred to her until it was too late.

"It was a poor house in a wretched quarter of the town. Accompanied by her personal attendant, my mother passed swiftly down the narrow thoroughfare—a ministering angel. Refuse heaps lay about, and starving dogs raked up the seeds of malaria. Arrived at the house, she climbed the narrow staircase to her destination ; her attendant following closely. Her mission fulfilled, she departed ; but now the shadow that followed her was double. Death accompanied her steps. Though she knew it not at the time, a malignant fever raged in one of the rooms of that poverty-stricken den, and in less than a fortnight the earthly presence of my mother had left us for ever ; her spirit had fled to heaven. The attendant escaped. The life so full, so complete, so valuable, so necessary, was taken ; the other life, with no claims, no ties on earth, nor wife to miss a vacant chair, no child to look for its return, was spared.

"I was too young at the time to realise the full extent of my loss : but I was not too young to feel the keenest and most poignant sorrow. Day after day I went mourning, passing through room after room made familiar with her presence in the days which were never to return, and which her spirit still seemed to haunt ; and night after night, for many a long month, I cried myself to sleep. You will say this was strange tenacity in a child of ten, but both naturally and by training I was years older than my age. I could not feel more deeply now in many ways than I felt then. Perhaps, indeed, it is the other way. Manhood is strong to bear, and those who have suffered much, as they grow older suffer less. It is a truism that to have suffered acutely is in a measure not to be able to suffer again."

"And your father?" we asked.

"My father?" returned Osman. "I scarcely know *how* it affected him. No one ever knew. For a whole week after the funeral he shut himself into his own apartments. No one saw him. His meals were taken to an ante-room, and his days were passed in a small study that no one presumed to approach. At the end of that week he came forth again to the world, so changed that many would not have known him. His cheeks were hollow and his eyes were sunken. The agony must have been overwhelming, the conflict terrible. No one ever knew what he had gone through ; no one ever dared allude

to that time. As the months went on he recovered his looks, and was once more, to all appearance, himself : outwardly unchanged.

"Inwardly there was a transformation. Never inclined to sentiment, the poetry and romance of life, he grew stern, practical, devoted to his life as a diplomatist, thinking only of the wise ruling of an empire. I was the one bright spot in his horizon. He could not bear to have me under any roof but his own. Where he went, I must go also. As much as possible I became his companion. His ambition was centred in me, no less than his affection. He spared neither thought nor trouble in my training, and I owe him an eternal debt of gratitude. It is strange that, under such influences, I did not grow up hard, unpoetical, unromantic, indifferent to the beauties of Nature, the delights of art and music and antiquities : in a word, all that elevates and refines. No ; the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leopard his spots, and I am an example of that truth. I had inherited not only my father's nature, but my mother's. Had she been left and he taken, probably the whole course of my life would have been changed. I am, however, of those who believe that all is for the best. There is a divine ordering in the most trifling affairs of the universe, how much more in the lives of men. Perhaps," he smiled, "we should then have met for the first time on the top of Mount Parnassus, contemplating the ruins of the Acropolis, and writing verses to the glories of Ancient Greece. My life has been a more healthy one, no doubt. The hard realities of diplomacy and government have kept in check all the romantic tendencies of my nature, which might have led me into a thousand follies I have not now to regret."

Osman possessed indeed a singular combination of qualities. His mind seemed large enough to embrace many subjects, however opposed to each other they might be, so that each was in itself wholesome and intellectual.

He was gifted in a rare degree with two virtues that are too often found apart—imagination and common-sense. His judgment was far-seeing, clear, and unerring. If he had a fault, it was that he did not pause to look at a subject from an opposite point of view. His own point, however, was almost invariably correct, and it had the effect of giving him firmness, decision, and self-confidence.

His mother must indeed have been a wonderful woman, as great in her way as the husband in whose heart she reigned supreme. Her love for the beautiful and the good was not acquired ; it was part of her nature, inseparable from herself. In our many conversations Osman placed before us a complete mental picture of the authors of his being. We saw them scarcely less distinctly than he himself. His graphic powers were wonderful, and he described people and places with an earnestness and a vividness we had never seen equalled. We were much together, and for our sake he prolonged his stay in Cairo : fortunately having the time at his disposal. We grew intimate, and a friendship resulted which promised to be lasting. "I know not

how it is," he one day remarked, "but though our acquaintance has been short, I have talked more freely to you, and laid bare the innermost recesses of the heart, my most sacred thoughts, as I never did to any one in my life before. I feel as if the time had never been when we were unknown to each other. I saw you on the platform at Alexandria long before you saw me. I knew you would come to my carriage and that we should travel together. It seemed to me that we had met in some previous state of existence: a doctrine in which neither you nor I are senseless enough to place any faith. Was it psychic force, or mesmeric power, or merely the intuitive recognition of similar tastes and thoughts? It was not mere accident, for you know that I do not believe in it. I can trace none of the events of my life to chance. The threads have been held and interwoven in a manner that would have been impossible had not an unseen Power guided the helm."

So it came to pass that, day by day, intimacy grew more firmly into friendship, which on one side at least was founded on esteem and admiration. It was impossible to be much with Osman without discovering how far he was above other men. The small flaws and contradictions and inequalities of character so common to most, in him were absent. His large soul could descend to nothing trivial, entertain nothing ignoble. It was no effort to him to be great. His mind was for ever soaring into the sublime regions of thought, the rose-coloured realms of imagination. And yet there was a simplicity of character about him that was singularly charming and refreshing. He had ever before him two high ideals: the remembrance of a mother who, though she died when he had not left childhood behind him, lived long enough to plant a fervent affection in his heart, and leave an unfading influence upon his mind; and a father who, though of a different mould and more contracted sympathies, still, in intellect, in unswerving integrity, and in personal influence, was a giant amongst men, and had left lasting traces on his day and generation.

Thus it was that day after day we spent many hours together; saw daylight and moonlight scenes from the same points of view. But no scene did we find fairer, more wonderful, more weird and ghostly than that midnight view from the minaret amongst the Tombs of the Caliphs: the scene with which we opened this paper, and from which insensibly we have wandered.

It was indeed, as Osman had said, a scene exceeding all the magic of earth, beyond all one's powers of imagination, mocking every attempt at description,—a veritable city of the dead, flooded with the cold, pale, brilliant moonlight, in itself an emblem of death, if compared with the warm, glorious, life-giving powers of the sun. Much of what we felt and thought had to be passed over in silence, for there are times when words are powerless, and only break the charm by which we are bound. Below us and about us were the

solemn domes marking the spots where the dead lay in their last long sleep : and we wondered how many had passed into those realms "beyond the skies," where sun and moon, and seed-time and harvest, and day and night, and winter and summer, are not ; where the voice of the Muezzin is no longer heard bidding the faithful to prayer ; where chance and change happeneth to no man, and the hours are not marked : because Time is swallowed up in Eternity.

CANTATA.

AROUND the Earth Moons wander ;
Round Suns the Earth :
Round one great Sun all circle
In golden girth.

Pater noster qui es in cœlis.

And in these worlds which from each other shine,
Spirits unlike, yet like because divine,
Dwell loving Thee. They praise Thee—they are Thine.
Sanctificatur nomen Tuum.

He of all things possessed—
Who sole-sustained exists, approves, maintains,
And over all His works rejoicing reigns,
Desireth that His children should be blest.
Adveniat regnum Tuum.

Well—O Almighty One—
Well for these wandering spheres,
That not to them but unto Thee be given
The ordering of the years.
Fiat voluntas Tua.

Thou at whose word upsprings the golden ear,
Who dost the luscious grape with sweetness fill,
Who feedest lambs on hills—in woods the deer,
Keep back Thy storms from ear, fruit, wood, and hill.
Panem nostrum da nobis.

Far o'er the thunder's path
Immortals meet !
Let there be no more wrath ;
Bid friend and foe join in communion sweet.
Remitta nobis debita.

Many ways lead unto the haven where
Life's storms are still :
Guide through the desert sands the wanderer—
Deliver us from ill !
Libera nos ! Amen.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

THE STORY OF A WANDERING CROWN.

THE red walls and watch-towers of a royal palace rise on the grey cliffs above the Danube, which flows between the twin cities of Buda-Pesth, the present capital of Hungary. A Magyar soldier, in uniform rich with brown fur and gold embroidery, conducts us through vaulted corridors to the Schatzkammer, or treasury, which contains the Hungarian regalia. Collars, orders, and stars gleam with rainbow light; ropes of pearl and chains of emerald are heaped up in barbaric profusion, amid rude coronets of beaten gold and uncut jewels, which carry our thoughts back to the days of the savage Huns, whose chieftains first wore these insignia of royalty. Heavy golden bracelets and clasps, engraved with cabalistic figures or hung with Oriental charms and amulets, suggest the same train of associations.

But more precious to the loyal Magyar heart than all this *embarras de richesses*, whether of barbaric rudeness or mediæval splendour, is the ancient silver crown of Hungary—battered, dented, and black as old iron. We gaze on it with reverential awe; for surely no crown in the world has undergone such wonderful vicissitudes.

When the royal line of Orfad became extinct, Hungary was filled with confusion. The Pope crowned one candidate; the Diet elected another, who immediately donned the coronation robes and the silver crown. His pretensions were speedily suppressed by the King of Bohemia, who surrounded the walls of Buda with his troops, and carried off both king and crown to an impregnable Bohemian fortress. Otto of Bavaria was then chosen by the Hungarians as their future ruler, on condition that he should first recover the famous crown, with which the fortunes of Hungary have ever been so closely connected.

The Bavarian prince agreed to the conditions, and, disguising himself in the garb of a merchant, he set forth on his quest and reached Bohemia in safety.

He speedily learned that the country was on the verge of ruin; war had decimated the population and exhausted the national finances. The land was untilled and the resources of the kingdom at the lowest ebb. Under these circumstances the value of the Hungarian Crown as a trophy of victory was at a discount. The misfortunes of the impoverished State and the dire necessities to which it was reduced destroyed chivalrous sentiment and national pride. The supposed merchant profited by the situation, and soon entered into such successful negotiations with the harassed and pauperised government that he was enabled to secure the possession of the silver crown.

Having carefully packed the treasure in a wooden cask, he slung it behind the rude waggon which held his miscellaneous wares, and started on his homeward journey through the dark Bohemian forests. As the waggon went jolting down a rough road between the blue-black aisles of pines, the cask became loosened and fell into a deep pool of muddy water, hidden by the overshadowing branches of the sombre trees. The disguised prince plunged into the water, but the dim light of an autumn afternoon and the slippery bank of the forest tarn made the rescue of the cask and its precious contents a difficult matter. In the waning twilight success at length crowned his efforts, and the shivering merchant, half-drowned and covered with mud, proceeded on his way, trying to forget chilled limbs and chattering teeth in the elation of triumph which warmed his ambitious heart.

Elizabeth, the widowed queen of King Albert of Hungary, was the next to disturb the safety of the silver crown.

The death of the king had plunged the country into a vortex of strife and confusion, which raged in ever-increasing tumult round the red towers of Buda, threatening the life and liberty of the desolate queen. In the midst of the contest she resolved to escape from the dangers which threatened her, taking with her the ancient crown round which the hopes and affections of Hungarian royalty had entwined themselves for so many centuries, regarding it almost as a symbol of faith as well as an ensign of regal power.

With the aid of a lady-in-waiting, the queen removed the heavy crown from its satin-lined casket, and with trembling fingers sewed up the treasure in a velvet cushion, while her handmaiden, drawing the iron bolt of the ponderous oaken door, listened intently for any approaching footfall on the stone stairs which led to the turret chamber of her royal mistress. Darkness fell, gradually all distant sounds died away, as undisturbed save by her own fears, the queen, with flushed face and fast-beating heart, finished her task.

The palace-clock tolled twelve before the work was done. The cry of the watchman and the clanging arms of the sentinels relieving guard echoed for a moment through the silence of the sleeping household. Then the deep stillness of a winter midnight brooded once more over palace and city, and the fast-falling snow, which muffled every sound, enabled the trembling fugitives to escape the vigilance of the guard.

The queen and her faithful attendant stole out unobserved through a postern door, into the thick and murky air, and, descending the cliffs in safety, fled across the frozen Danube. Slipping and stumbling, and falling across great blocks of ice in the darkness, the queen, though bruised, terrified and exhausted with fatigue, never lost her hold of the precious crown; but after taking refuge in Germany, she was reduced to abject poverty; want stared her in the face, and in her distress she pawned the historic crown of Hungary to the Emperor Frederick for three thousand ducats.

Indignation fired every patriotic Magyar heart ; war was declared, and, after much bloodshed, the battered crown was recovered by the Hungarian army and taken back in triumph to Buda, where it was locked up in a fortress and guarded night and day by two State dignitaries chosen from the Magyar nobility.

For the next two centuries, though the sacred crown was taken on many long and eventful journeys, it never fell into the hands of an enemy. Then came the revolution, which caused the Hungarian kingdom to totter to its very foundations, and the crown again narrowly escaped seizure. It was saved by a band of patriots, who, in order to protect it from the Austrian army, buried it deeply in the heart of a gloomy forest.

Fifty years passed away before the precious relic was disinterred from its hiding-place. Damaged, bent, and battered almost out of recognition, it was then conveyed by a rejoicing multitude to the Hungarian capital, where it has ever since remained in safety, considered as the most priceless treasure of the national regalia, and trebly endeared to every brave Magyar heart—by the lives sacrificed in its defence and the wars which have raged around it.

The veneration with which this ancient crown is regarded may be compared to the feeling accorded to the tattered and blood-stained colours of a regiment, wrested on many a battle-field, amid smoke and carnage, from the hands of the enemy. The strife and tumult which for so many centuries surrounded the silver crown, only increased its moral value and heightened its significance, finally winning the due recognition of Hungarian needs and requirements.

The brave Magyar race stoutly refused to denationalise itself by incorporation with Austria, and, at last, the necessity of self-government for Hungary was admitted. Francis Joseph of Hapsburg was solemnly crowned King of Hungary as well as Emperor of Austria, and accepted with the silver crown the double responsibility of the double monarchy.

Thus the historic crown fulfilled its destiny, and at length rests in undisturbed security after the centuries of conflict in which it played such an important part. The transitional state between barbarism and civilisation has been of necessity prolonged in a country so steeped in warlike memories ; but the independence so gallantly fought for has been achieved at last, and the ancient silver crown of Hungary, revered for so many ages as the emblem of national freedom, has become the eternal monument and memorial of national victory.



MR. WARRENNE :
MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER IX.

A RUINED GLOVE.

MAUD and Alice were fond of spending the fine summer mornings in the arbour at the bottom of the garden, reading and working and sometimes practising their songs ; for the place was so secluded that they had no fear of attracting passengers by the sound of their voices. This morning, however, they often interrupted their studies to talk over the events of the preceding evening. It seemed as if Alice would never come to an end of her questions. She wanted to have everybody described, and all their sayings repeated.

"And Mr. Courtenay!—only to think of your meeting the very man of whom Leonard has spoken so often!" cried Alice.

"And that he should be the same person who frightened us in the lane when we were children!" returned Maud.

"Tell me again all he said to you," said Alice.

"It was not much—I wouldn't talk to him—I despise him so!" exclaimed Maud.

"But he does not know that Leonard is a gentleman?" asked Alice.

"And do you think that if Leonard were rich he would treat the poorest person in the world as Mr. Courtenay treats him?" said Maud, indignantly. "On the contrary, he would be even more courteous than he is now."

"I wish he was rich!" cried Alice.

"I wonder what would become of his philosophy then?" said Maud.

"He would not need it," replied Alice, simply.

"Shall we sing that duet again?" asked Maud.

"Do," said Alice, striking her tuning-fork.

As they had remarkably beautiful voices, and as Mr. Warrenne had strained a point to give them the best instruction, it was not wonderful that they sang to admiration.

Old Karl stopped his barrow under the garden wall, and, in the discordant voice common to deformed persons, murmured an accompaniment to the simple German air. Karl was privileged ; Maud saw and heard him, gave him a nod, and went on with her part.

All at once Alice stopped, laid her hand on her sister's arm, and listened.

"Hush!—footsteps!" she said.

"So, this is where you hide yourselves!" said Mr. Courtenay, making his appearance from amongst the shrubs. "I was told I should find you in the garden."

Maud drew up indignantly, bowed because he took off his hat as he spoke, and looked inquiringly at him, as if to ask what brought him there.

"I heard all the first verse, and part of the second," said Courtenay, coming close to them; "you sing remarkably well, upon my word."

"We ought to be flattered," said Maud. "Do you want papa? He is out."

"Thank you, no; I want *you*. This is your sister? How do you do, Miss Alice?"

Alice looked up with a shrinking expression of dislike on her countenance, bowed, and remained silent and listless.

"She does not like strangers?" he asked, looking at Maud.

"Some strangers," said Maud; "she goes by the voice."

"Well," he replied, with a smile, "in voices she has a right to be fastidious. But to my business. Mrs. Creswick wishes you to drive out with her to-day; she will call for you at two o'clock."

"Oh, Maud!" said Alice; "it is to sketch the Roman arch; Mrs. Creswick said she would take you soon."

"I am much obliged to Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, rising, as if to close the interview; "I will take care to be ready."

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To gather some peas," returned Maud; "you may tell Miss Reynolds so, when you go back, she is greatly interested in my doings."

"Why don't you make your German servant gather them?"

"Because I like to do it myself," replied Maud.

"I will help you," said Courtenay.

"Oh, pray do!" returned Maud; "it will be something new to you to find yourself gathering peas."

"And you can tell your brother of *me*," said Mr. Courtenay; "then we shall be even."

Now, when Maud acceded to his proposition, she had not the least idea that he was in earnest. She was surprised and vexed when he coolly took up the basket from the arbour seat, and prepared to set to work.

"Are these the peas?" said Mr. Courtenay; "what do you call them?"

"I call them Blue Prussians!" said Maud, growing very cross. "You don't hold the basket right—I can't reach it there."

"Oh! I beg your pardon; you must let me come between you and your sister; then you will both be able to get at it."

"And then," cried Maud, "you gather all the little pods that are of no use. Pray leave it alone! Any one could tell that you were born in London!"

"But I was not born in London; on the contrary, I was 'raised' in the West of England, quite in the country; but I never gathered peas before. You ought to teach me, instead of scolding and growing angry."

"I should be sorry to have to teach you anything," returned Maud.

Alice, with one hand on the rim of the basket, gathered fast with the other. She said nothing, but smiled at Maud's vehemence.

"Look here, I have caught you in the fact," said Courtenay; "it is you who gather the little pods, not me. You cannot deny that you gathered that one."

"That one I did," said Maud; "but you gathered all the other little ones. When there are no more peas, I shall tell papa who gathered them wastefully."

"Dear me! Miss Alice, don't you pity me?"

Alice laughed.

"There, I am sure, Miss Warrenne, you cannot mean to eat more peas than those."

"As if I ate them all!" cried Maud. "Besides, you do not in the least know how many there will be when they are shelled."

"That is true. I am sadly ignorant; but you should not be proud because you know more than I. Do you not play the organ, Miss Alice?"

"Only the harmonium," said Alice. "I have not an organ."

"Will you let me hear you play?"

Alice looked perplexed, but Maud said firmly, though she coloured as she spoke: "Papa is out, and therefore Alice and I cannot receive any visitors."

Mr. Courtenay seemed to see the propriety of this remark; for he said immediately, "I would not, on any account, intrude upon you; but, eh! no rule without an exception."

For at that moment there came up the garden walk, with the air of being completely at home, a gentleman, who, though no longer young, was still handsome.

"Oh! it is Mr. Scudamore. Good morning," cried Maud, and, without farther ceremony, she and her sister ran forward to meet him.

Mr. Courtenay stayed just long enough to see Mr. Scudamore stoop down and pry into Maud's basket, and then turn to go back to the house, with one of the girls hanging upon each arm.

"I must ascertain who this Scudamore is," said he to himself; "a fine-looking man, upon my word."

"I thought you had been an immense time away," said Florence, as Mr. Courtenay entered the dining-room, where they were all at

luncheon. "I suppose you have been spending the morning to very good purpose with my aunt's pattern, Miss Warrenne?"

"Is it so?" said Courtenay, turning with a delighted countenance to Mrs. Creswick; "do you think so highly of her? And you never told me!"

"Perhaps I left you the pleasure of finding it out," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Miss Warrenne will be happy to drive with you at two," said Courtenay.

"Then, of course, Mr. Courtenay, you don't ride; we must try to do without you," said Florence, ironically.

"I ride, Miss Reynolds, but not your way, I am afraid."

"Some secret," said Florence, turning scornfully to Captain O'Neill; "I suppose you know his proceedings pretty well. Perhaps Miss Warrenne is not the only favourite in this neighbourhood."

"Florence, my dear!" said Mrs. Creswick, in a warning tone.

Captain O'Neill seemed quite overpowered by this witticism; he did not appear to know how to leave off laughing.

"I wonder who is to chaperon her through all the love-making!" exclaimed Florence, who seemed neither inclined to take Mrs. Creswick's warning hint, nor to let Maud alone.

"She seems to be one of the few young ladies who can do without a chaperon," said Courtenay, coolly.

"Oh, we all know her to be perfection," said Florence; "and perfect people are to me intolerable."

"There is another class of intolerable people, to my mind," said Courtenay; "those who never aim at perfection."

Captain O'Neill did not understand him, but Florence did; she coloured with anger and jealousy; for though she had not the remotest idea that Mr. Courtenay had any intention of recommending himself to Maud Warrenne—indeed, she felt far too much contempt for her to believe it possible—yet she could not endure that the smallest particle of praise should be bestowed in her presence upon any other woman.

"And who is this Mr. Scudamore?" asked Mr. Courtenay, after a pause.

"Oh, the pleasantest man!" cried Florence; "he was once in the army; and I do so like military men."

"Even when they are English," said Courtenay, drily.

"Yes; that is the only thing which makes them bearable," returned Florence.

"Mr. Scudamore is a very worthy neighbour of ours," said Mrs. Creswick; "an elderly man, and an intimate friend of Mr. Warrenne's."

"Oh, you need not fear his running away with Maud from you," cried Florence.

"I am not timid, Miss Reynolds," returned Courtenay, quietly.

Florence, finding that she gained nothing by wrangling with him, rose pettishly, and went upstairs to put on her habit.

Mrs. Creswick called for Maud, and bade her bring her pencils to draw the archway. It was a ruin but little known, in a very unfrequented part of the country; standing among pasture fields and lanes, rough from disuse, and thickly belted with old hedges. A crooked ash had taken root above the arch, and hung fantastically over, while gnarled oaks and sycamores pressed rudely against the crumbling sides of the grey stonework. They left the carriage and walked a little way down the lane to get a better view of the ruin. Just beneath the arch, with his arm over his horse's neck, stood Mr. Courtenay, waiting their arrival, with as much composure as if he had merely halted to rest his horse in his progress up the steep ascent.

"Put me in, if you like, Miss Warrenne," he said, as soon as they drew near enough to speak. "I charge nothing for sitting."

Maud did not deign to reply to him, but said pettishly to Mrs. Creswick, "He blocks up the arch with his horse!"

"Does he?" said Mrs. Creswick, smiling; "suppose then we ask him to move?"

This Maud did not condescend to do. She took one of the camp-stools that the servant was placing, and opened her sketch-book.

"I think, Mr. Courtenay, we must have you a little nearer this way!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"With the greatest pleasure," said he, coming forward. "Here, Bob, hold my horse."

The man's name was Lewis, but that made no difference to Mr. Courtenay.

Maud, who remembered how perseveringly he had assigned the *sobriquet* of Mr. Cooke to Leonard, turned away her head, that he might not see her laugh.

"Now then, have you any pencils to be cut?" said Courtenay, throwing himself on the bank by her side.

"No, thank you."

"Some colours, then, to be rubbed?"

"Nothing—I can't bear to be waited on," said Maud, looking steadily on the arch.

"How do you mean to shade it?"

"With sepia—when I get home."

"It would look better coloured."

"Very likely."

"You can't do it, I suppose?"

"Yes; Maud can draw admirably in water-colours," said Mrs. Creswick, finding that no answer came from Maud.

"Ah! then it is only idleness," said Courtenay.

"Is this your usual method of ingratiating yourself with ladies, Mr. Courtenay?" asked Mrs. Creswick, while Maud had stepped nearer to the arch to examine something a little more minutely.

"I never ingratiate myself—I never cared for a woman before—I never shall again—it's not my way," said Courtenay, briefly.

"You cannot hope to succeed without a little more deference; we expect it before marriage," said Mrs. Creswick, with a smile.

"Yes, and what do you get after?" said Courtenay. "If she likes me, I will make her happy; if she does not, what should I gain by persuading her for a time that she did? I could get on well enough with a wife I cared nothing about; but if I married *her* and found she had made a mistake, I would blow my brains out!"

"My dear Mr. Courtenay, do not talk so!" cried Mrs. Creswick, quite startled by the coolness with which he announced his intention.

"And what would you have me tell her?" pursued Mr. Courtenay: "that she is beautiful?—she knows that already. That she is noble?—it runs in her veins. That she is accomplished?—she might say I am no judge. No, depend upon it, my way is the fairest."

"Have you got it right?" asked Mrs. Creswick, as Maud came back to her seat.

"Oh yes! I thought it was some decoration; but it is only decay," returned Maud.

"A very pretty part of the country," said Courtenay to Mrs. Creswick.

"Yes; just here you get a little silver strip of the river, and farther on the mullioned windows of Forrel Court peeping through the elms."

"You see it through the arch, like a picture set in a frame," said Courtenay. "Have you got it all into your distance, Miss Warrenne?"

"Of course," returned Maud.

"I shall like to see the end of this sketch, as I was present at the beginning," said Courtenay.

No answer from Maud.

"We must try and get a peep of it!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"*You* shall, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud.

Courtenay smiled, and, taking up her glove which lay on the ground beside her, amused himself by drawing out the slender fingers.

"Why, he has got my glove, Mrs. Creswick!" exclaimed Maud, colouring with anger.

"Give it her," said Mrs. Creswick, feeling half amused and half unequal to the task of mediating between the two disputants.

Courtenay pressed the glove to his lips, and handed it to Maud. She flung it down, and set her foot upon it—absolutely crushing it into the ground in her anger.

"My dear, my dear!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"Now, I have done, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, shutting her book; "and I should have done before, if I had not been bored."

Then crossing before Mr. Courtenay, she got into the carriage, and sat at the farther side, looking over her sketch until they started.

"A very excellent young man," said Mrs. Creswick, after a pause.

"That is a good thing," replied Maud; "when people don't know how to be agreeable, it is a comfort to think they are excellent."

"Here he is, galloping after us," said Mrs. Creswick.

Maud looked another way.

"Just in time to hand you out," exclaimed Courtenay, coming up, as the carriage stopped to set down Maud at her garden gate.

After this adventure, Maud resolutely declined all Mrs. Creswick's overtures; she would not drive with her—she would not go to drink tea at the Ferns. Courtenay was—not in despair, that was very foreign to his nature—but exceedingly chafed and put out of his way. He confided his annoyance to Mrs. Creswick, who sympathised with him, but declared her inability to do more. All she could promise was that she would get Maud, somehow or other, to attend the evening party she meant to give next week.

On Sunday Mr. Courtenay set out for church before any one else, and loitered about the churchyard until the Warrennes appeared.

They came on each side of their father, quietly dressed in their plain straw bonnets and white gowns. As Maud passed Mr. Courtenay, who stood by the porch, she bowed hurriedly in return for his salutation, which she did not see until she had almost passed him, and then went straight to her pew. And that slight bow was all he got in return for loitering half an hour about the churchyard, and drawing on himself the sarcastic wonderment of Miss Reynolds for the rest of the day.

Maud never turned her eyes towards him during the service, and although he was able to contemplate, unobserved, her broad forehead and long downcast eyelashes, yet he would have rather preferred that she should seem just now and then a little conscious of his presence.

And when church was over he came out too soon, and missed her that way; and while he was handing Mrs. Creswick into her carriage, he had the satisfaction of seeing her passing on the arm of Mr. Scudamore, who was addressing to her some jesting speech in which he could only distinctly catch the single word, "Dick!"

CHAPTER X.

MUSIC AND DANCING.

MR. WARRENNE could not refuse Mrs. Creswick's kind and pressing request that he would bring both his daughters to the Ferns the night of her party. Maud rebelled a little; but, contrary to her expectation, Alice was easily persuaded. If her father would promise to keep beside her all the time, she thought she could encounter it; and she should find some amusement in listening to the music (it was a quadrille party), and catching the conversation of the people around.

It happened that Mr. Scudamore was also invited; and the girls

were delighted at an addition to their party which promised to render them still more independent of Miss Reynolds and her associates.

Mr. Scudamore brought them each a beautiful scarf of red cachemire, worked at the ends in large flowers with silver thread. As these scarves were very narrow, Maud suggested that they should be worn as sashes; she saw that nothing could be more picturesque than the contrast with their white muslin dresses; and she did not know that anything not universally worn is sure to draw down the wrath of a certain class of persons. So they went—Alice and her father, Maud and Mr. Scudamore. Simple as were their dresses, the splendid scarves round their waists, with the silver fringes nearly reaching their feet, made them appear effective, and they were beyond compare the loveliest girls in the room: Maud, with her figure tall, slight, and spirited as Diana, and her dark hair banded back and shining like a mirror; Alice, shorter, softer, her face and neck shaded by the wild profusion of her beautiful ringlets.

The company were assembled in the music-room in order to hear some professional singers, who were engaged to perform before the dancing commenced.

Courtenay joined the Warrennes just as the singing was about to commence; was introduced to Mr. Warrenne by Mrs. Creswick, and stood leaning on the back of Maud's chair.

"Have you forgiven me yet?" asked Courtenay.

"I have forgotten all about you," said Maud, turning away impatiently.

"That's better still—we are good friends then," he said.

Maud did not choose to confirm this statement.

"You are fond of music, of course?" said Courtenay.

"Yes, I like it," replied Maud coldly.

"Here comes the *prima donna*," said Courtenay; "I don't know what her voice may turn out, but she is a very sensible person."

She was a German, and most probably, from her appearance, of Jewish extraction: short, heavy, and dignified in her aspect, with large, handsome arms, and a brow like a thunder-cloud. She wore some scarlet flowers in her black hair, walked slowly and indolently to the piano, dropped her fan and handkerchief into a chair behind her, and sat down to accompany herself, making a slow and sleepy bow to the professional gentleman who had offered her his services. She sang with great power, great ease, and great expression.

As soon as she rose from the piano, Mrs. Creswick came up and begged Maud and Alice to sing a duet—asked it so earnestly, as a favour to herself, that it was not easy to refuse.

Maud led Alice to the piano, and she struck off a prelude with the hand of a master.

Courtenay said something in a low tone to the German singer, and she lifted up her dark Jewish eyes with an expression of interest and surprise. He had told her that Alice was blind.

The sisters sang beautifully. Alice was not timid, because she could not see the people, and Maud felt brave because she sang with Alice. And not attempting anything beyond the reach of amateurs to execute, and gifted with voices of that pure and vibrating sweetness which may so often be found among the English, it might have been supposed that their singing would have been generally liked. But not at all—the guests seemed horribly bored, and heartily glad when the duet, which was a very short one, was over.

The professional people, however, gathered near to listen, and nearer to praise; for it is very odd that musical people are more generous than others in bestowing commendation on those who excel.

"It is a talent that God so often gives to the blind," said the German singer with much feeling, as Alice returned to her seat; "you are very fortunate to possess it: rich, it gives you pleasure; poor, it would have given you bread."

Alice stretched out her hand to the singer. "I am so glad to have pleased *you*," she said.

"Mademoiselle Mohr would prefer speaking German," said Courtenay, for the last few sentences had passed in French.

"It is the same to me," said Alice.

"You would have been flattered if you could have seen Mademoiselle Mohr during your song," said Courtenay to Alice; "I assure you, she had tears in her eyes."

"And Mademoiselle 'tears in her voice,'" said the German; "but you," she added, looking up to Mr. Courtenay, "were equally pleased."

"Quite enchanted," returned Courtenay, drily.

Mademoiselle Mohr thought he spoke ironically—she looked puzzled. "Yet I thought you loved music," she said.

"Very much attached to it. I have a stall always at the Opera, and I listen to the ballet."

"How flattering to us!" said the singer, with a smile.

"After that, I cannot hope to induce you to give us another song," said Courtenay.

"The dancing is going to begin," replied the German; "you who listen to the ballet, should now be thinking of finding a partner."

"Presently," said Courtenay. "I shall like to hear your opinion of the lady who is about to favour the company."

Captain O'Neill was now seen ostentatiously leading forward Miss Reynolds, in a white lace dress, with a beautiful garniture of China roses. She looked very lovely and very diffident—turned round with a movement full of grace to Captain O'Neill as she took her seat, and gave him her large bouquet to hold with an air of sweet resignation that might have become Lady Jane Grey when she offered her prayer-book to the Lieutenant of the Tower. But her singing was not quite so good as that which preceded it. She got hold of a very fine air by Niedermeyer, with a great many flats and sharps, and she had an unlucky propensity to confuse those useful little steps in the musical

ladder. Everybody was glad when she had finished : Captain O'Neill, because he could not flirt so well while she was singing ; Courtenay, because it bored him ; Alice, because it gave her absolute pain ; the German, because, under her solemn aspect, she was shaking with suppressed laughter ; and the rest of the people, because they wanted to begin dancing.

But all round the room there ran a murmur of " Beautiful ! Exquisite ! This *is* singing ! We have not had such a treat all the evening ! "

And one worthy lady turned to Maud, and congratulated her on the great advantage she might derive from listening to such a delightful performance.

Maud replied politely, and Courtenay, after translating the lady's remark into German for the benefit of Mademoiselle Mohr, who burst into an indignant laugh, said to Maud :

" You did quite right ; I make a point of it myself ; there is no possible absurdity in which I do not gladly acquiesce. It is too Quixotic an effort to attempt to explain to people."

" There was nothing to explain," said Maud, smiling ; " the lady thought Miss Reynolds sang better than I did ; I was the last person who should try to convince her that it was not the case."

" How very well you speak German," said Courtenay.

" Oh ! when Leonard was with us we spoke it constantly, he was so fond of it," replied Maud. Then stopping, as the name of her brother brought before her all Mr. Courtenay's airs, she turned to Mr. Scudamore on the other side.

" I wish, Mr. Scudamore, I could give you a little bit of this sofa," said she ; " but it is impossible."

" Eh ! child ?—oh ! I don't wish to sit down. Who are you going to dance with ? "

" I hope with me," said Courtenay, advancing to her.

" No, thank you," said Maud, quietly, but firmly.

Courtenay bowed and drew back.

" Do you know what you have done, child ? " said Mr. Scudamore.

" Do you know that you cannot dance now with any one else ?—that you must actually sit still all the rest of the evening ? "

" I shall not sit still, grandfather," said Maud, " I shall walk about with you, and look at the dancers. I don't choose to dance with that man."

" Ah ! if Dick were but here," said Mr. Scudamore, as he offered Maud his arm.

The quadrille band now struck up, and the drawing-room was speedily thronged by the dancers and the lookers-on.

Florence swept past Maud, on the arm of Captain O'Neill, with a look that seemed plainly to say, " Poor soul, nobody will ask you to dance ! "

" Could you not have said you were engaged, or you would wait a

little, or anything that would have left you at liberty?" pursued Mr. Scudamore. "People won't believe you had the opportunity."

"It seems to prey upon your mind, grandfather," said Maud, laughing. "I shall consult you next time, and get a fib ready."

The quadrille being over, people began to form a waltz.

A very young gentleman, with a pert, dark, Spanish face, was leading Mademoiselle Mohr to the dancers. He passed close to Mr. Courtenay, who was leaning against the wall, looking coolly on.

"I say, Courtenay, it is such a bore!" said the young gentleman.

"What is a bore?"

"Dancing with this woman, who can't understand what I say."

"My dear friend, depend upon it, she will not be a loser on that account," said Mr. Courtenay, quietly.

This kind of speech was always well received by Mr. Courtenay's friends, under the idea that it was "his way," that he never meant anything, and that those people who thought him satirical were "quite mistaken."

"I say, I wish you would take her off my hands," pursued the young gentleman.

"With all my heart."

And Courtenay, in a few words, explained to Mademoiselle Mohr that the young gentleman was reduced to despair at being unable to converse with her, and that he hoped for the honour of dancing with her in his stead.

The singer, well pleased, consented to the transfer, and the young gentleman trotted up to Maud.

"I'm so enwaptured," said the youth, who always perverted the letter R; "I thought I should never have got wid of her. Why can't she speak English?"

"For the same reason that you cannot speak German, perhaps," said Maud, laughing.

"Will you do me the honour to waltz with me?" asked the young gentleman.

"No, that I cannot do, unfortunately," replied Maud.

"Cannot you waltz?"

"Not this evening."

"Pway don't wefuse me, for I've set my heart on dancing with you," said the young gentleman.

"Not to-night, indeed; for I have refused some one else," said Maud.

"Oh! if that is all," said the young gentleman, "I beg that you will begin diwectly, and if the fellow gwumbles, I'll call him out."

"No, no, young gentleman, that will never do!" said Mr. Scudamore, looking very much amused.

"Who was it?" asked the youth; "I should not wonder if it were that fellow O'Neill. I should like to pick a quawwel with him, for he is sometimes vewy diswrespectful in his manner to me."

"It does not matter who it was," said Maud, smiling; "it is all over with me for this evening."

The young gentleman remained shuffling about near Maud for a minute or two, and then exclaimed, as if a thought suddenly struck him :

"Stop! wait a bit; I'll set it all to wights in a minute."

Then crossing to Mr. Courtenay, who had led Mademoiselle Mohr to a seat, and was standing talking to her, the young gentleman suddenly pulled him by the arm.

"Hollo! what do you want now?" exclaimed Mr. Courtenay.

"Oh! I say; I want to dance with that angel in the wed scawf."

"Well, dance away then, and don't bore me."

"But I wish you would attend to me," said the young gentleman, with another pull; "thewe is a difficulty!"

"A difficulty, is there?"

"Yes; she has wefused some fellow, and so she hesitates about accepting me."

"And you are such a reasonable person, that of course you see the propriety of giving up the matter."

"Never!" said the young gentleman. "I want you to come and pewsuade her, or else I shall do something despewate!"

"You look very formidable to-night," said Mr. Courtenay, drily. "I am quite at your orders."

"Come, then," said the young gentleman, "I know it is that wetch O'Neill; and I shall have the twiump of cawwyng her off before his eyes!"

It was so customary for Mr. Courtenay to be applied to by all his friends in their difficulties, and to bring them through by some means or other, that the young gentleman made sure of his partner on the spot.

Mr. Courtenay went up coolly to Maud, and, turning towards his companion, said: "Allow me to present to you Mr. Osborne—Miss Warrenne."

Maud bowed, and wondered; but she was still more surprised when he added:

"Mr. Osborne is very ambitious of dancing with you. May I hope that he will be more successful in his application than I have been?"

Maud coloured deeply. There was something generous, she thought, in this frankness; and she was keenly sensitive to generosity of character; but then it showed that he was not reduced to despair by her refusal, and that was an unflattering view of the case.

"I do not wish to dance to-night," she replied; "and I thought I should have been understood when I pleaded a former refusal. I am quite sorry that Mr. Osborne should have taken the trouble to urge his request."

Mr. Osborne seemed still very much disposed to argue the point; but Mr. Courtenay, taking the vacant seat next to Maud, said to him:

"I almost think you had better try your fortune in another quarter."

It seemed as if none of Mr. Courtenay's friends were in the habit of disputing his commands; for Mr. Osborne, after a little shuffling indecision of gesture, went to another part of the room.

"Now, I wonder," said Mr. Courtenay, looking steadily at Maud, "what was your objection to dancing with me?"

Mr. Scudamore had left her to speak to Mr. Warrenne, who was with Alice at the other side of the room. Maud, surrounded by strangers, felt as much alone as if she had been in a desert. She coloured, and made no reply.

"Because," he continued, "I can't well have offended you during our very short acquaintance; unless, indeed, you have not yet forgiven me for meddling with your glove."

Still Maud remained silent, wishing heartily that she was out of reach of his searching eyes.

"But if I have, from any inadvertence, displeased you," he pursued, "I beg you sincerely to forget it. I could imagine nothing that I would more earnestly avoid than giving you offence."

"You have not given me any," replied Maud, in a constrained voice.

"Here is Miss Warrenne determined against dancing," said Mr. Courtenay, as Mrs. Creswick came up to them.

"What! Maud sitting still!" said Mrs. Creswick. "Whose fault is that, my dear?"

"My own fault, Mrs. Creswick; I prefer looking on," replied Maud.

"Do ladies ever tell the truth on these occasions?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

Mr. Scudamore joined them at this moment, to the great relief of Maud.

"My dear," he said, "your papa and Alice are going; they are both tired. If you like to stay, I will take care of you."

"You don't know what a charge you undertake, Mr. Scudamore," said Maud. "I will go at once for fear of getting you into a scrape."

"Will you, really?" said Mrs. Creswick.

"If you please, my dear Mrs. Creswick," returned Maud; "I am growing sleepy."

"That is because you won't dance," said Courtenay, following her into the hall.

Mr. Scudamore put on her shawl, and handed her down the steps.

"Oh, I am so glad it is over!" said Maud, as they stepped out into the moonlight and the fresh, dewy air; and the sounds of the waltz beat fainter and fainter as they left the house behind them.

"The best part of a party must always be the walk home!"

CHAPTER XI.

IN VAIN.

THE attentions of Captain O'Neill to Miss Reynolds at this party were so marked that the guests all went home impressed with the belief that he was her accepted suitor.

He had danced with her whenever he found her disengaged ; the rest of the time he spent in wandering about the room, or taking up the seats which ought to have been reserved for the ladies ; for he was one of those men who cannot pay attention to one woman without rudely neglecting all the others who are present. Mrs. Creswick watched their growing intimacy with much disquietude ; and on the morning after the dance, she thought that it was proper to come to an explanation with her niece on the subject.

Florence received her aunt's summons with much dissatisfaction, lingered over her toilet to the last possible moment, and then made her appearance with an encouraging air of weariness and indifference ; sank down into an easy-chair opposite to her aunt, and prepared herself to listen.

Mrs. Creswick, seated perfectly upright, turned over the book before her for some moments in silence, and then fixing her breathless looks upon her niece, she said :

"Now, my dear, will you tell me exactly how you are situated with regard to Captain O'Neill ?"

"Do you know, my dear aunt, that you have chosen a very difficult question to put to me ?" said Florence, languidly smiling.

"Take plenty of time, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick ; "all I ask is a very clear and accurate reply."

"How I wish that I had Miss Warrenne to assist me !" exclaimed Florence ; "she could define, I dare say, every shade of a gentleman's attentions ; but for me, my dear aunt, I am afraid I must reply I don't know !"

"You can tell me, perhaps, whether you have yet received a proposal from Captain O'Neill ?" said Mrs. Creswick, steadily.

"Even that, my dear aunt, is sometimes no easy question ; there are so many ways of insinuating a proposal, as Maud Warrenne will tell you."

"Suppose we leave Maud Warrenne quite alone for the present, and come back to the point," said Mrs. Creswick, calmly.

At this crisis, Florence was seized with a fit of laughter that she seemed unable to control. "You must excuse me, my dear aunt," she cried ; "but those scarves ! Did you ever see anything so preposterous as the figures those poor girls had made of themselves ?"

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick, patiently, "as soon as we can get rid of the scarves, we will go back to the old story. Has Captain O'Neill yet made you an offer ?"

"Why—no—not exactly," said Florence, hesitating.

"Then I am thankful to think that it is not yet too late for you to retire with credit from this affair," said Mrs. Creswick, "for you must be aware that he is a person whom your father would highly disapprove."

Florence coloured high with anger, and said with a disdainful smile: "Is it a fair question to ask in what manner Captain O'Neill has had the misfortune to displease you?"

"I have reason to believe," said Mrs. Creswick, "that he is a man totally devoid of religious, and even of moral principle; that he has always led a very irregular life, and that he is so deficient in education and intelligence, that there is but slight ground to hope for his reformation; for Doctor Arnold (and he is a very high authority) tells us that 'if you take away a man's knowledge, you do not bring him to the state of an infant, but to that of a brute—and of one of the most mischievous and malignant of the brute creation. . . . He then who is a fool as far as regards earthly things, is much more a fool with regard to heavenly things. He who cannot raise himself even to the lower height, how can he attain to the higher?'"

Mrs. Creswick having read the above sentences from the book which lay before her, closed the volume and looked steadily at her niece.

"I am sure he is a very honourable man!" exclaimed Florence, indignantly; "he goes everywhere, he is in the best society! I believe he is no worse than other people, only he is no hypocrite!"

"It pains me," said Mrs. Creswick, "to hear you quote the opinion of *society* in support of any man's character or conduct. How many persons move through society, caressed and honoured, who are at enmity with God, and basely negligent of all that elevates and purifies our nature!"

"I never had the least ambition to marry a Methodist, my dear aunt," said Florence, quietly.

"I think it right," said Mrs. Creswick after a pause, "to tell you a circumstance that fell under the knowledge of one of my intimate friends, not very long ago, although I should hope that at your age you are a perfect stranger to the very name of such transactions." (Poor Mrs. Creswick! She had never been behind the scenes of a boarding-school!)

"Not long ago," she continued, "he persuaded a married woman, the wife of a tradesman, to quit her husband and children for his protection."

"Drawn in, I dare say," replied Florence, with perfect indifference; "those women are so designing!"

"In this instance," said Mrs. Creswick, sternly, "the wretched young woman was much respected until she attracted the notice of Captain O'Neill. He ruined the peace of a family hitherto remarkable for its quiet comfort; he deprived three unhappy infants of a mother's care, and he destroyed the life as well as the virtue of his

victim, who died two months ago, of grief and shame, of what is usually called a broken heart."

Mrs. Creswick had spoken with much feeling, and she paused, hoping to have aroused some displeasure, perhaps some sorrow, in her niece's mind. But Florence, after arranging her bracelet with much care, looked languidly towards her aunt.

"Poor man," she said, "what a bore for him! I dare say it is unknown the scenes he had to go through. He will be wiser next time, and not attempt to undermine such very rigid virtue. It really does not answer on the whole."

Mrs. Creswick was bitterly disappointed, for she made it a rule to think the very best she could of people, and she had hoped to find something like womanly feeling still lurking in her niece's heart. A thought just crossed her mind for a moment, as to whether a creature so devoid of sensibility, so callous to right and wrong, was worth any farther effort to save; but it was one of her maxims that the fulfilment of our duty should be always entirely independent of persons or circumstances.

She glanced at her watch, and then, turning with a calm face to her niece, she said:

"I will detain you but a short time, but I must beg your earnest attention to what I am about to say. I had hoped that such a tale as the one I have just touched upon, would have decided you against the most splendid match that the world could offer. But if your taste leads you to prefer what is depraved, you must be saved from your own inclinations. You cannot marry Captain O'Neill; your father would not allow it; and, therefore, it is deeply important that you give him no reason to believe that his suit will be successful."

"I am too candid, my dear aunt," said Florence, rising gracefully; "if I like a person, I cannot help showing it; and should Captain O'Neill continue to please me, I must try and persuade papa to settle something very handsome upon us!"

And with these words she glided gently out of the room.

Mrs. Creswick rose also, took her bonnet from its box, and her mantle from its drawer—she was very fond of waiting on herself—and put them carefully on; then stepping to the open window before she left the room, she saw Florence crossing the lawn with Captain O'Neill; he seemed to be begging, and she coquettishly withholding a bit of geranium which she held in her hand. Such was the result of the morning's interview with her niece.

The sisters, in their turn, had much to discuss, the morning after the ball.

"I am so sorry you did not dance, Maud," said Alice. "Mr. Scudamore told papa he had never seen you look so handsome."

"The grandfather is partial," replied Maud; "but I should not like the idea, indeed, of dancing with that horrid man. I can hardly speak civilly to him, when I think of Leonard!"

"I think Miss Reynolds ought to marry that scornful Mr. Courtenay," said Alice, smiling.

"They would be very well matched," returned Maud.

"Does he waltz well?" asked Alice.

"Pretty well; not nearly so well as Leonard."

"Is he handsome?"

"Not at all! Don't let us talk of him; it puts me out of patience!" exclaimed Maud.

"Look out, and tell me what the grandfather is doing with papa," said Alice.

"They are walking up and down the front, and the grandfather has a letter in his hand."

"Anything about Alberic?" exclaimed Alice, turning pale.

"Grandfather," cried Maud, leaning from the window, "Alice wishes to know the contents of that letter she hears you have in your hand."

"Maud!" said Alice, trying to draw her sister back.

"Oh, you are up, are you, after all your fatigues?" said Mr. Scudamore, coming to the window, and sitting down on the ledge. "This letter is about Dick, Mistress Maud. He has been wounded at the taking of that Fort they were expecting to be ordered against when he last wrote."

"Oh, grandfather, how sorry I am for you!" exclaimed Alice.

"All in the day's work," said Mr. Scudamore, coolly; "but he has a mind to try what a sea-voyage will do for him. It seems he has been hit in the knee, and the doctors there advise him to lose the limb. He thinks they will manage better for him over here; and so, Maud, my dear, he is coming home."

"Oh, dear, how dreadful!" said Alice, shuddering.

"Oh, I have no doubt the voyage will set him up again; it always does," said Mr. Scudamore.

"But," said Alice, "we have not heard from Alberic; how is that?"

"My letter came by Marseilles," said Mr. Scudamore; "but I can tell you that your brother is very well, though he was with the lines at this siege, and in a perfect shower of shot and shell; where, you know, Queen Maud, he had no business to be!"

"I know—I am glad of it!" cried Maud, with great animation; "it is what I should like myself. What a beautiful sight a siege must be! And a man is more a man who has once looked Death in the face!"

"Listen to Queen Maud!" said Mr. Scudamore, laughing; "I hope you will bear that in mind when you see Dick!"

"How needless!" exclaimed Alice; "how unkind to us, to put himself in such danger. Oh, Maud, don't praise him for it when you write!"

"What the child says is very true," remarked Mr. Scudamore; "he

was out of his place ; it is not his *métier* ; if he had been knocked on the head, he would have got no thanks ; but you and I, Maud, think it is very natural, for all that."

"Here comes the white horse," said Alice.

"On my word, I am sometimes tempted to think with Mistress Thorne that the child is not blind," said Mr. Scudamore.

Mr. Warrenne, at the sight of the white horse, now folded the letter carefully, and returned it to Mr. Scudamore.

"I see no reason, my dear friend," he said, "why he should not recover this injury ; but I could not pronounce an opinion with any confidence without seeing the patient."

Then mounting the white horse, he inclined his head to Karl, who held the bridle, with that tranquil courtesy which always distinguished his manner, and rode slowly through the gate.

"A good horse and trusty," said Maud, "though not quite an Orelia : perhaps, grandfather, you did not happen to know that Orelia was the courser of Don Roderick ?"

"Not I, 'faith !" said Mr. Scudamore ; "I say, Queen Maud, look here !"

As he spoke, he placed under her eye a passage in the letter, which he had folded back.

"Mrs. Creswick and Mr. Courtenay," said Dinah, opening the drawing-room door.

"Ah, how do you do ?" said Mr. Courtenay, as he entered ; "I am come to see if you have any more peas to be gathered."

Maud started and looked up, all crimson, from the letter, made no reply to Mr. Courtenay's considerate proposal, but went up straight to Mrs. Creswick.

"Mr. Scudamore kindly bringing you news from India?" said Mrs. Creswick, seeing the sheet of thin paper in that gentleman's hand.

"Yes, Madame," said Mr. Scudamore, taking off his hat ; "and now I leave them in such good hands, I will wish you all good morning. And, Queen Maud," he added, lowering his voice to a whisper, and tapping the letter which he held, "don't you listen to that fellow yonder. Remember, Dick will be here before Christmas !"

"Nonsense," said Maud, turning abruptly from the window.

"And what made you knock up so soon last night, Miss Alice ?" asked Courtenay of the younger sister.

"I was very tired," said Alice ; "I am not used to sitting up so late."

"Late ! It was not one o'clock !"

"That is late for me," said Alice, smiling.

"And late for papa," said Maud, "who has to do his work next day, whether he sits up or not."

"Were you singing ?" asked Mrs. Creswick, seeing the harmonium open.

"Yes, we were trying a bit from a Mass of Pergolesi," said Alice; "it is such a sweet movement!"

"Will you let me hear it?" asked Mrs. Creswick.

It was a duet, and Maud looked cross; but Alice, who was so familiar with music as not to mind it any more than netting or plaiting straw before strangers, rose at once, saying:

"I am sure we shall be happy, if you will excuse a little hoarseness on my part, for when I am tired my voice always goes."

Courtenay hastened to hand her to the instrument; but she smiled gently, and said, "I find my own way best. I am going to look for the book."

"And of what use is the book to you?" asked Courtenay as she placed it on the stand.

"It is for Maud," said Alice; "she is apt to forget the words."

"And how do you learn to play a new piece?"

"Maud reads it over to me, as you would read a page of poetry until you knew it."

"You would not know what to do without your sister?"

"Without her!" exclaimed Alice, with a gesture of terror. "Oh, no!"

"But when she marries?"

"Oh, Maud will never marry," said Alice, seating herself contentedly at the harmonium; "she is not rich enough."

"Do you play the piano also?" asked Courtenay.

"Yes, I learned on the piano; but the harmonium is so nice for sacred music that papa saved up and bought me one," said Alice, with her usual simplicity.

"And who is this Dick that I hear talked of?" asked Courtenay.

"Dick? Oh, only a joke of Mr. Scudamore's; we have never even seen him!" said Alice, beginning to play the symphony.

Maud came up to her, and they sang the duet.

"Very sweet, indeed!" said Mrs. Creswick; "one seldom hears such singing. But I am going to be very exacting—I am going to ask Maud for the 'Roman Girl's song.'"

"It does not go well with the harmonium, and the piano is in the dining-room," said Maud; "and I had rather sing it another day."

"Will you sing this 'Agnus Dei'?" asked Courtenay, taking up a piece of music from the harmonium.

"That belongs to Alice," said Maud quietly; and going to the table she took up her work, and seated herself beside Mrs. Creswick.

"And I must say good-morning," said Mrs. Creswick, rising.

"Oh, Mrs. Creswick," said Alice, "do look at this rare orchis before you go. Mr. Scudamore brought it yesterday for papa."

Mrs. Creswick stepped to the window-seat and examined the flower. Maud remained by the table, working in silence.

"You sing divinely," said Courtenay, coming up to her.

"All young ladies do," returned Maud coldly.

"I tell you plainly what I think," said Courtenay, with much earnestness ; "I wish to heaven you thought of me in any one respect as I do of you."

Maud coloured, and bent her head over her work.

"I see you shun me," he continued. "Deal frankly with me ! Have I no power to alter your sentiments towards me ? Is it in vain ?"

His voice faltered ; Maud withdrew her hands, which he had taken in the eagerness of his appeal, and hurried out of the room.

"It won't do," he said, coming abruptly up to Mrs. Creswick ; "I go back to town to-morrow !"

(To be continued.)

ANSWERED.

"Ah, where," she asked, "does the butterfly
That flits in the sunshine, dwell?
And is it a song, or is it a sigh,
That floats from the ring-dove's dell ?

"And what do the light winds say as they roam,
With their murmur so soft and low ?
And the foxglove, is it the fairies' home
As it used to be long ago ?

"And do they steal out on a starry night,
When nobody sees or hears ?
And weep to depart with the dawn's first light ?
And the dewdrops, are they their tears ?

"And what is the tale that the whispering wheat
Keeps telling the passer-by ?
And why does the rose always smell most sweet
Just before it is going to die ?"

And so, with her young soul ever astir,
The bright summer long she basked,
Till the Father Omniscient sent for her,
And answered her all she asked !

WILLIAM TOYNBEE.

IN HOUR OF NEED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "GENTLEMAN STEPHENS," ETC.

WALES of to-day deviates far more from the self of the early part of the century, than does its neighbour England. To those whose primitive customs had been preserved from generation to generation in the wilds of mountains, and the thinly-populated country districts, railways had more novelty to bring than in regions educated up to a more equal standard. At first, changes, fashions, punctuality, and the civilising effect of new-found conveniences of transit and communication penetrated slowly, but at present date Wales has adapted itself to them with tolerable completeness, and bids fair soon to attain to the ordinary world's dead level, in which so much individuality and picturesqueness get lost.

Before this consummation is quite reached, it may be as well to turn over any stores of memory that yet keep images of Wales's earlier self to see if anything worth preserving may be found among them. For any such in my possession I am largely indebted to my friend of yore, Miss Morris, who has already been introduced to the reader in these pages,* shrewd and cheery, *Celtic* and loving; and that many of her annals and anecdotes were coloured by the fact that the Welsh are an intensely religious people, the following pages will show.

I was staying with her in the heart of the country when the dialogue in question took place, and would that I could bring to life again the homely charm of the old-fashioned room where we sat, and the gifted language of her who told the story. What made that language deserve such a name it were hard to tell, for eloquence was unthought of by the speaker, but the quaint, ever apposite phrases of which she made use, the transitions of mood and the mimicry (never coarse or unkind) that lent dramatic power to her recitals, could chain the attention of a roomful of listeners of varied ages and conditions, and can be conveyed by no more fitting word.

It was a Sunday afternoon, and I was ensconced in a deep window seat in Miss Morris's best parlour, looking out across green and garden to the road and country-side beyond.

She sat in a horsehair arm-chair near, in matronly cap and black silk dress. Our Sunday books were scattered round us, and now we read and now we talked, and so long-drawn-out and pleasant was the time that if there were only sixty minutes to the hour then, I think the clocks of to-day must tick to some different measure.

I had just been watching come leisurely into sight, and pass out of it, the homely figure of a Dissenting minister, riding by on a pony that knew better than to exert its full powers under so unexact-
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* "When the Century was Young."—*Argosy*, August 1892.

master. The scene was the heart of Wales where such sights are familiar, and the preacher probably going from dinner at one comfortable farm-house to tea at another, before doing duty at some neighbouring chapel. Many a prayer has been offered, many a text pondered by such a rider in such a country lane; where watercress and saxifrage have leave to make broad bordering to each tiny brook, and meditation finds its right atmosphere in the consciousness of mountains ever near.

My thoughts, being a good deal "to let" that afternoon, followed the preacher out of sight. I knew little of the characteristics of his class, and had probably never spoken to one such preacher in my life. Miss Morris, however, knew everybody and everything in the district, and stood, moreover, in that position between the gentry and farmer class that forms so convenient and, under favouring circumstances, so happy a link between them.

"What is your-opinion of Dissenting parsons?" I asked her now, after the sweeping manner of youth; "are they really good men or only humbugs?"

"Well, one cannot give a yes or no exactly to that," said Miss Morris, with a smile. "I suppose, in speaking of a collection of anything, from kings down to shillings, there will be bad as well as good among them. There *are* hypocritical men, of course, among these preachers, ambitious, domineering ones—I have known several—and selfish, grasping ones who deserve to be called, like a Davis I once heard of, '*Davis hyd hwm*' (Davis of this world), but they are only some. There have been, and there are, as good men in their body as ever were the Apostles themselves—humble-minded, honest, and self-denying. They are poor, as a rule, you know, and in some of their denominations many work hard at their trades in the week-time, yet none are more ready to help those who are in need. We Welsh are mostly theologians; but some of these preachers are such students of the Bible, and so spiritually-minded, that they might rise to the highest position with greater advantages."

"They have not much education, then," I said.

"They had not much formerly, unless just here and there, but in these days that is improved. Their colleges are well seen after, and I hear the standard of education gets higher and higher. I only hope the spiritual one keeps up with it, but it would be difficult to outshine or even come near the saintly lives led by some preachers in the past, such as Williams of Pantycelyn. He was one who 'hoped all things' for all men whoever was not. I told you what he said of the man falling over the bridge?"

"No; what was that?" I asked.

"A poor man had committed suicide by throwing himself from a bridge, and some of those who knew how charitably-minded Williams was, said to him, just to try him, 'Well, for *that* sinner, at any rate, there can be no hope.' 'No hope!' said he, quite indignantly.

‘Why not? Who can tell what passed between him and his Maker between the parapet and the water!’* ”

“I should have loved that dear old man!” I said. “If all Dissenters were like that, many might go to learn from them. And their Welsh singing is almost better than ours at church. At least it sounds so beautiful from outside, that I often stop to listen to it, passing their chapels. Do most of the preachers know English, Miss Morris?”

“I daresay all do now, but it was not such a matter of course in days I can recall. Oh, no! many of them were very uncivilised then—simple-minded, too, as children. Dear me!” said Miss Morris, with one of those involuntary laughs of memory, that looking back on life often brought her—sometimes ending with a sigh. “I remember a poor young man—one of the preachers at some great meetings that lasted several days. He was entertained with others at a respectable farm-house where the people kept a good table, and did things quite nicely for that grade of life. Plenty of young people were there, and so was I.”

“You are a Churchwoman,” said I; “but it seems to me you always set a splendid example in having so many friends among the Dissenters.”

“I am sure I do not know about that, my dear,” said Miss Morris, finding it difficult to deny a fact well known in the country-side; “but living in Wales people would cut down their friends a good deal leaving the Dissenters out. Oh, it is a pity—a pity!” she went on, a moment later, kindling into fervour, “it should ever be otherwise, when the things we agree about are so great and everlastingly important, and what we differ in such trifles in comparison. Why should enmity be felt because our outward forms of worship are not quite the same? But I must not tire you with it all . . . So about that young man. He wanted to be polite to all the world, poor fellow, and would go round shaking hands with every one, however full the room; and with time short and good things waiting to be eaten it was more ceremonious than convenient. At last, Mrs. Williams, the farmer’s wife, determined to give him a hint in dismissing him for the night.

“‘Never mind, how-d’ye-do, and good-bye *every* time, Mr. Evans,’ she said to him aside; ‘just *Pec-o-Pen* will do, you know.’

“*Pec-o-Pen* means a nod of the head with us in the country . . . To be sure! How some little trumpery will stay in the mind when so many better things are forgotten. We made up verses about that young man, and I remember some of them even now. They began with a description of him:

“A preacher he and well inclined
To live as should all preachers,
And set example fit and right
To all his fellow-creatures.

* The writer is not sure that this true anecdote is not attributed to the wrong preacher.

"But then we went on to hint he might with advantage have a little more worldly wisdom, and related how tiresome it was, with feasting and company all about, to be interrupted for ever by his going round shaking hands with every one.

"Saying, 'How d'-ye-do, Miss Mally?'
And, 'How d'-ye-do, Miss Nance?'
Till with impatience where she stood
Each ready was to dance!

"Of course, however, this trouble Mrs. Williams hoped she had set right by her advice. But, oh no! Next morning came, and with it Mr. Evans, but round went he as laboriously as ever with only one difference, about which our song goes on:

"For '*Pec-o-Pen*,' says he to all,
And warmly grasps each hand
Of those who all-impatient sit,
Or thrice-impatient stand.
And, '*Pec-o-Pen*, Miss Mally,'
And, '*Pec-o-Pen*, Miss Bess;'
So though the words were different, he
Detained them none the less!"

"We laughed, and after a few more reminiscences Miss Morris sat looking far out of the window in silence, half smiling still, and with a concentrated gaze in her eyes—the "exploring look" described in Sir Walter Scott's when telling a story—as if the records of the past were written in small type that asked for careful study.

After a while she spoke again, evidently following some track of thought just left.

"Indeed there have been good men among the preachers. Many of the seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal were among them in those days a century back, when the Church was so lifeless. Fashion was very godless just then, and the kind of sermons expected and praised were full of deep theology that few understood and fewer were any the better for, but Wesley and Newton had followers among the Welsh preachers, then and after, who came no whit behind them in excellence."

"I fancy them like Parson Adams," I said, "and the Vicar of Wakefield."

"Yes," said Miss Morris, "they were very like them, with just one added touch of interest to my mind in having a more *poetical* kind of spirituality. I sometimes have the notion that religion must come easier to Celts than to Saxons—if it is not wrong to say so. But imagination is a great help to faith, and it must be difficult, one would say, for the matter-of-fact ones to believe that God's dealings with the world which at present are so *unseen*, although so real, go on quite as much as in Bible days. To our *Welsh* feelings it comes natural enough, and it is no such hard matter to see His hand

moving in the great and little things of life. They say we are superstitious, and may be a little right, but that would not be the fit word to use for the kind of thing I mean. Did I ever tell you of that Methodist preacher in North Wales taking the money to Machynlleth?"

"No," said I; "how was it?"

"I forget all about him beyond that he was a preacher called John Jones, who lived when this happened at Caergwrle," said Miss Morris. "There had been a collection made there towards building chapels, and the money was to be delivered at a meeting at Machynlleth. Jones the preacher was a very good man, known to be as honest as daylight, and the money was given to him to take care of and carry to the meeting. It amounted to fourteen pounds, which in those days and in such a poor country was quite a large sum. Well, the time of the meeting came, and off went Jones, going on his journey through Merionethshire, where his road led past Bwlch-y-groes, up and down hill between the great mountains—and it is a mountainous as well as very beautiful country—indeed the one follows the other as far as my taste goes. It was his shortest way, but very lonely, particularly between Llanuwchllyn and Llanymowddwy, and hilly and heavy and troublesome altogether. A *diflas** way to travel, as we say, and so he felt it, but plodded on and told himself he had much more reason to be thankful and calm than to sigh and fear at every turn of the road. It was cold, however, among the mountains, very cold, and at last he halted at a public-house at Llanuwchllyn to refresh himself and his horse.

"In the bar-room of the inn a man—not particularly well-favoured—was sitting, and after watching Jones for a while and seeing what he ordered, began to talk to him. Jones was simple as a child, and very soon the man got out of him not only where he was going, but what took him there, and everything else he chose to ask. Presently the stranger got up and went away without remark to anyone to draw attention to his movements, and by and by the preacher, well warmed and rested, mounted his pony and began to climb the next hill. Forward he rode, his mind full of good thoughts, and at first he felt much cheerfulness. But after he had gone some way and was far from any person or house, with only mountain sheep grazing on the wild slopes round, that grew gloomy with every passing shadow from the clouds, who should he see before him but the man who had spoken to him at the public-house. He knew him again at once, and with no great feeling of pleasure, recognising him more easily that he carried a new *gryman* (reaping-hook) wrapped about, as they often are when new, with a wisp of hay. The man walked slowly, looking carefully about him as though to make sure there was no one coming after them, or before, or anywhere else, and when the preacher drew near he began taking the hay off the *gryman*."

* *Diflas*—pronounced *divlas*—cheerless, dreary, without pleasure.

"Oh, the poor preacher!" I exclaimed. "How frightened he must have been!"

"He was, indeed, for he had not liked the man's appearance, though one would not have thought it from his trusting him so in conversation, and the look of him now was very suspicious, and the way he kept preparing the gryman and watching had something in it, he thought, quite bloodthirsty and dreadful. Of course the robbery of the money was what he feared, and well he might in such a lonely place. Should he turn back or not? he asked himself; and Duty seemed to answer he must go on to the meeting. Yes; but not without prayer. *That*, he felt, would be madness, and so he prayed to God with all his strength.

"'O Lord,' he said, 'for Thy sake came I to this dreadful place; no message had I myself this way. I only brought *Thy* message to further the cause of religion. More than that, the money itself is Thine, only given me to keep till wanted for Thy service. Because Thou hast led me to this spot Thyself, and on Thy own business, I resign myself entirely to Thy will. Help me, O Lord, if Thou wilt, and save Thy money; but if not, do with it and do with me, dear Lord, as seemeth Thee good.'

"With all his soul he prayed and spoke to God as to a 'very present help' in the solitude of the everlasting hills, and indeed help was needed at once, for now he must overtake the man, who, with the gryman cleared and held up in his hand, stood waiting to receive him.

"It was a terrible moment, and the preacher, who had no pretensions whatever to any but *spiritual* bravery, felt his heart quake. How to defend himself he had no idea, and thought there was nothing for it, since he had been a man of peace all his days and knew nothing of fighting, but to resign himself to the robber's hands, and hope he might overlook the money. All of a sudden, however, before anything had time to happen, the swift tread of a horse was heard, and looking back on the road just travelled, the two men saw what the preacher afterwards described as a 'great gentleman on a grey horse, galloping on the points of the horse's hoofs, and as fast as possible.'

"Nearer and nearer he came, and the robber, with a look of astonishment on his face, moved hastily aside from his intended victim.

"With a prayer of thanksgiving, the poor preacher began to draw breath again in comfort; here indeed was protection such as he had not dared to expect, and under its shadow he could go on his way with safety and gladness.

"He shook up his little horse and hastened after the gentleman, and seeing them go on together, the robber turned sullenly the other way, and when the preacher looked back it was to see him putting back the hay on the reaping-hook."

"There could not be much doubt," I said; "he had had a narrow escape of feeling its edge in that desolate place!"

"Not much, indeed," said Miss Morris, "and I always seem to see them in those lonely mountains so full of awe—the robber skulking off and the homely figure of the preacher urging his little horse after the gentleman on his beautiful grey. Well, after a while, and being of a sociable turn, he thought he would speak to his companion, who was riding slower now. He cleared his throat by way of beginning.

"'Are you going far on this road, sir?' he asked, cheerfully; but receiving no answer fancied he had not been heard.

"'How far is it to Llanymowddwy, sir?' he tried next, speaking a little louder, but with no better success than before. The stranger looked straight ahead, riding on in perfect silence. On this, thinking he must be an Englishman, he dropped the Welsh he had been using, and spoke in English.

"'It is very cold, sir, on the mountains, is it not?' but the gentleman took no notice whatsoever, making as though he did not hear or Welsh or English.

"After this, the minister gave up all attempt at making friends, and journeyed on silently beside his protector. And by and by they came to the high road near some houses, and there the preacher (to use his own words again) '*lost* the gentleman between his hands;' where or when he went he could not say, as he did not go backwards or forwards it seemed, but was simply—*gone*.

"And a great fear fell on him. A strange kind of suspicion had all along lurked in his mind, and he asked himself now, What does this mean? And as answer to that question he felt as sure as if he had been told it that the Lord had heard his prayer, and sent His angel to deliver him and the money from the bloody man, and by saving his life had owned him for His servant. That thought his heart cherished to the end of his days. With tears of humble thankfulness he went on his journey without one shadow remaining of anxiety or fear, and reached Machynlleth safely. At the meeting he told what had happened, bidding all there thank the Almighty for befriending them, for it was He alone had kept the money no less than himself out of evil hands.

"And to think, said he, he had been foolish and bold enough to *talk* to an angel! 'And if I had done so about Christ or Heaven, perhaps he would have favoured me and spoken in return. But I did not try him with the right text, you see, so that honour was not granted me, and little indeed did I deserve it.'

"So that is all, my dear, and when you think of answers to prayer, sometimes you may remember poor John Jones and his ride over the Merioneth mountains!"

"And it really is a true story?" I said.

"Quite true according to what the preacher believed," said Miss

Morris; "and who need doubt it was an *answer to prayer*, let the stranger be who he might? It is well for us to see God's hand in little things as well as great. It checks our impatience when events and plans go contrary, and takes away fear and anxiety as nothing else can do. For we must not be in the same place after thanking God for helping us out of some trouble, but when the next comes be just a little braver and more firm of faith to meet it. And what an interest it gives to everything to believe that God is behind all, and that nothing happens by chance or without reason! As for ourselves and others being used without our knowledge, as the stranger on the horse perhaps was, to carry out His plans, I cannot help fancying in all reverence that our God takes *pleasure* in working grand ends out of unconscious means. Did I ever repeat you those beautiful lines about coral insects out of Montgomery's 'Pelican Island'?

"Each wrought alone, yet all together wrought;
Unconscious, not unworthy, instruments,
By which a hand invisible was rearing
A new creation in the secret deep.
Omnipotence wrought in them, with them, by them,
Hence what Omnipotence alone could do
Worms did All
Life's needful functions, food, exertion, rest,
By nice economy of Providence
Were overruled to carry on the process,
Which out of water brought forth solid rock.

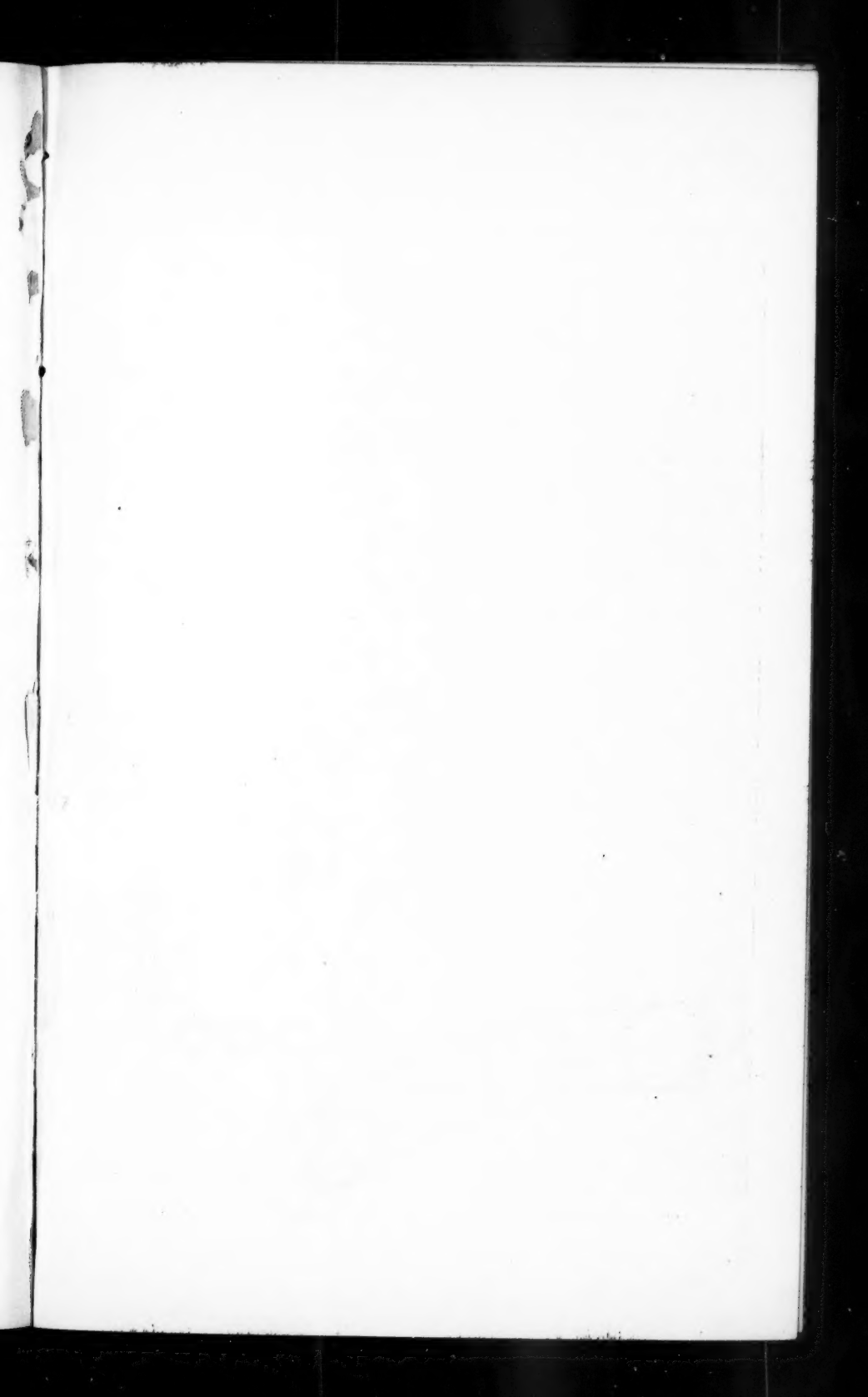
"Why, we know something of the interest of making unconscious things serve our ends even in our little experience: and after all, we *are* made in His image, so why should not some of our sensations in a dim kind of way bear a likeness to His? Anyhow, it would be a great joy and gratification hereafter to find one had been used to help and protect some one, even unconsciously, like the stranger on the grey horse."

"But do you believe *yourself* it was an angel?" I persisted.

"My dear, I do," said she, "if you want my real opinion."

"Then so do I," I said, "and always will!"







THE DOOR FLEW OPEN AND MRS. THORNE HURRIED INTO THE ROOM.

